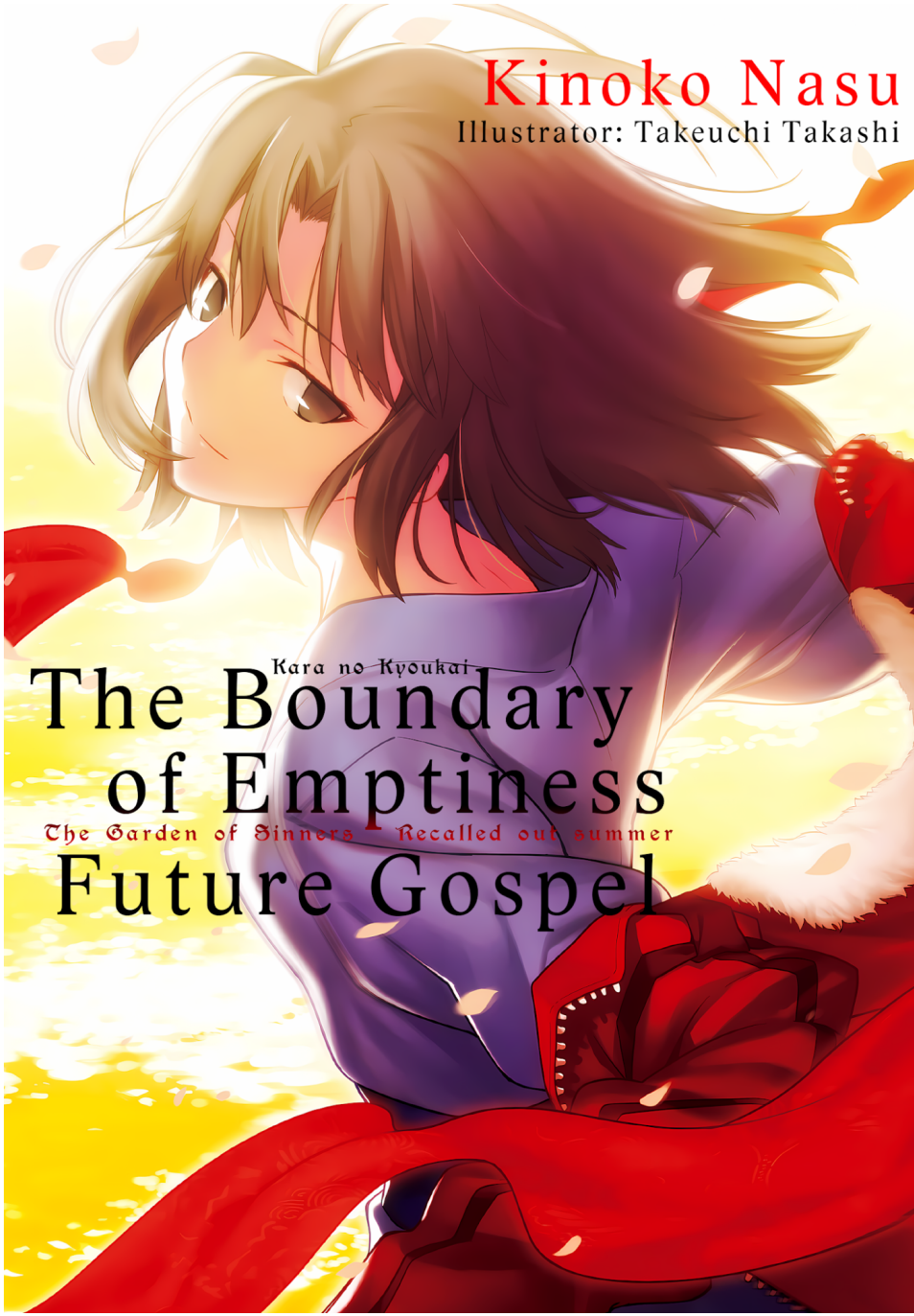
Kinoko Nasu
Illustrator: Takeuchi Takashi
Kara no Kyoukai
The Boundary of Emptiness
The Garden of Sinners — Recalled out summer
Future Gospel

The
Bo
of E
the Ga
Futur

The Boundary of Emptiness
Kara no Kyoukai

the Garden of sinners / recalled out summer

Mirai Fukuin
Future Gospel

Kinoko Nasu/Takashi Takeuchi

Quality Mistranslations/YHK

Formatted by
ProtoformX (PeriExe)

Typesetting by
Shido Itsuka

the Garden of sinners / recalled out summer

Future Gospel *Möbius ring*

Future Gospel - Introduction *Möbius link*

Table of Contents

Mobius Ring

Future Gospel

Möbius ring

There are two in my world.
One here in the past, one there in the future.

The left eye and right eye are different, gazing at the same world from different points of view.
The self seeing far away through the telescope,
and the self seeing through the rearview mirror.
Either way, the weight of the sins will not change.
I, the one who knows the result, am an irresponsible God.
Unable to change anything, simply waiting for the future.
No anticipation or hope for the future, not even a particular opinion.
A tedious day-by-day.
A tedious future.
A tedious life.
…But I'm sure; it's boring to always be first and best.
Mingling with melancholy and rolling around the bed is my daily routine.
Three days later's me will laugh at my own appearance.

/Future Gospel

There are two in my world.
As for which is th e sh ad ow of the oth er,
I ca n h onestly say I'v e fo rgo tten how to ch e ck …

4\

August 3rd, 1998. Eleven thirty-two A.M. The heat wave reached its peak. On the riverside a short distance from the heart of the city of Fumine, there is a large department store that was established close to ten years ago. Separated from the station entrance are shops maintaining the vast plots of land – isolated from the city center, like a misplaced fortress.

A four-storey high, wide, stereotypical store front.
A food court with family staples, and a shop with none of the latest electronics, not even old-fashioned electrical appliances.
Shoes, Western clothing, libertine medicines, lightbulbs, and assorted unorganized goods were arranged like cordial neighbors. A seemingly modern, balanced trading fair. While it doesn't reach their high hopes, it is the lifeline of the people around it, providing their necessities.
However, compared to that abundance of the product line, the interior of the shop has little liveliness. Before noon, there are almost no customers; the station workers, the visitors, before they realize it's already past twelve o'clock.
Summer vacation is no different. The everyday morning at the department store is shrouded by the slow passage of time.
Relaxing air from the outside fills every floor.
Even with some customers and visitors sitting by, this place still feels like it doesn't correspond with outside time. The ominous call of ambulances, and the piercing echoes of patrol car sirens fill the air.
If I want to live I have to get moving.
The fortress city-like department store, being built so securely, was not made to cope with abnormalities coming from the inside. Surely, no one has noticed the presence of the outsider.
The third floor of the multi-story parking lot extending from the department store. That's where I was, pursued by the knife-wielding girl in a kimono, who appeared now outside the angle of view of the surveillance camera.
"…Hey, I've caught up, mad bomber."
The girl talked into the cell phone, then opened her hand. The cellphone dropped to the concrete floor.
From the sash on her back, the girl drew a knife.
The two eyes carefully took in the surroundings.
The parking lot was quiet.
The summer sunlight cast shadows dark as night.
Something was coming up on the elevator.
The ceiling was low, and the line of sight poor, filled with columns, cars, and other obstacles.
The girl had no idea… couldn't guess that I was here twenty meters away, in the shadows of the wagon.
Between me and the girl are three explosives.
On the roof of the parked cars were metal pipes. The gunpowder inside was each packed with about five hundred corundums, each a few millimeters in diameter. Due to the concentration of gunpowder, both ends of the pipe were sealed. These are not like the firebombs from before, meant for pure destruction; these were made specifically to kill this girl.
From the previous failures, I have successfully concluded the most efficient method of caging her.
Once they explode, the corundums will travel in all directions for ten meters. There is absolutely no route of escape in the three-point trap; there will be

no one-in-a-million chances. I have already made sure that the corundums can reach the target. As for damage, there will only be the girl whose bones will be ripped from her flesh, the surrounding cars which will be scrapped, and the family who will appear from the elevator in ten seconds.
The girl walked in a straight line in my direction, unable to see me.
The elevator door opened.
The child carrying bags of groceries and the happily-laughing parents walked into the parking lot.
The family had barely entered her vision when I pressed the button on the remote control.
In an instant, the unassuming, simple fuse was activated, and the gunpowder lit.
A few seconds' confusion was enough to dull the girl's movements.
One second later.
Ryougi Shiki, her body taking the full force of the 2mm corundum shrapnel, yet still retaining her human form, was, at her wit's end, instantly killed.

1\

Unavoidably , summer came.
The strong sunlight makes you squint reflexively.
A fresh green scent flows out from the woods.
If you walk down the streets, it would seem that a summer in Japan is essentially a whirl of heat and humidity, but that urban hustle has no connection with this school located deep in the mountains. Seeming a bit too much like a scene from a summer resort, a great morning debuted.
This modern prison, or rather, school – which can even make a weeping child separated from everyday life to start feeling doubtful – is the Reien Girls College. An all-weather bastion that runs on self-motivation and little excitement, meant for those young women of high pedigree, gradually becoming a rare breed.
"Seo, you've been here since middle school? You've seriously lived like this for three years?! …Well, I guess I'll be living here too starting this year. But seriously, what do you guys think?"
And so forth, coming from the tired and worrying face of Naomi-chan, having been admitted here from the senior high department Like her, most of the new entrants were despairing over Reien's strict regulations.
The basis of Reien is a boarding system. Forget about leaving school

grounds, even in the dormitories, going next door to hang out must be thoroughly reported. Half of the day in the classroom, the other half in the dormitories; this merciless managerial system makes day-to-day living difficult for those who like to have their fun.
However.
The ones who suffer are doubtless those already in an enviable position gifted with freedom. Spending half your day in a room fit for a princess, having a cup of tea brewed by a stylish steward, saying stuff like, 'oh dear, Gravetaker (8-year-old golden retriever) is quite a bother to the guests,' and laughing like so: "oh ho ho ho."
The rich and the famous, we have both here. Between the two you have those who, well, just followed through on their interests regardless of pedigree or financial flexibility and, before you know it, became rich men. The house of Seo, famous in Hokuriku for our wine cellar, is that sort of troubling people.
As a well-established store with over two hundred years of history, these wine-brewing fiends have a severity which can be matched by the coldness of winter. Anyone who is useful or has a hand free will be worked hard. I've been on friendly terms with alcohol since childhood, so I can confidently say I won't lose to anyone at Reien in holding my liquor, though actually saying that will land me a one-week correction course for sure, but anyway. Before I came to Reien I had no such thing as free time. Oh, how nice it would be to spend some time with a hobby, even if there was no one else in the house. That dream continued every day; maybe the wish was granted, though I now spend half a day caged in my room, so it's just the sa – well actually, by sitting at this desk, I have finally obtained sweet freedom!
On top of that, my room is a leftover from Class A, so for now I have no roommate. All by myself in a room meant for two! My own room! This is important, I have to say it twice! Basically, as long as I take care around the Sister, I can stay in this most ideal, hidden environment.
…Well, while personal problems do occasionally fall into this ideal Reien Girls College life, I am usually cheerful.
"…Haaah."
Usually. I stepped down the dormitory hall with a sigh, the Sister having summoned me.
From one side of the long hall came bright sunlight.
I passed through the old, creaking wooden hall with melancholy. Not because I'm heavy, but because of the luggage I'm carrying.
"Seo Shizune of 1-A. Your father has contacted you and is on hold, please come to the office on the first floor -"
My shoulders dropped when that PM echoed through the dormitory.
Rather than melancholy, maybe it's more resignation, "so it really did end up like this," that sort of disappointment.
Here we go – and getting a better grip on the bag, I walked down that empty summer hallway.

◇

A morning from a barely-begun August. And so, with no forewarnings, I had a conversation with my parents.
It went something like: 'We know we promised to let you stay at Reien for summer vacation this year, but your father changed his mind, so come back before the end of this week.' To something so incredibly tyrannic, having to go against my own wishes to meet my father's expectations, for once I wanted to say, with a voice dripping with dissatisfaction, 'Father can drown in wine-making Hell'; understanding this, I reached a personal agreement, and handed the receiver back to the Sister.
"Seo-san, are you going home?"
"Yes, it seems the arrangements have changed. Sorry for your troubles."
"No no. This is troubling for Seo-san as well. You need time to prepare -"
The famously cool-headed Sister Einbach stared blankly around my feet.
My Boston bag, packed with luggage, sat there, as I promptly submitted my filled-in Summer Departure form.
"You surprise me, Seo-san. To have prepared so thoroughly…"
"Not at all. That's the only thing I'm good at."
'Excuse me,' and after a curtsey for the Sister, I relocated to the lounge.
The salon is the only place in the dormitory where students can talk privately. Gathering here to chat for an hour is the only entertainment in Reien. Of course, with the Sister standing next to the door, you can't just come and go as you please.
As it is still a summer vacation morning, the Sister is nowhere to be seen. Over half the students have gone home, so the Sisters are probably taking a break, too.
"…Geez, still thirty minutes till the next bus…"
Even the bus schedule is lying to me.
August 3rd, a Monday. I should stay until Obon, but oh well. I know better than anyone that disobeying them is pointless.
After all, I've been trying to find some possible error with this resulting future since last night.
"Ah. There's a lazy cat on the sofa. What are you doing here, Seo? Sure is nice to be able to go right back to sleep in the morning without a care."
"…"
I raise my sunken, languid body from the sofa.
It was Naomi-chan, anarchistically disposed yet a diligent student, coming from the study room next door. The tea in the study room is free but it's delicious, or something. A high-spirited girl who, bored with Reien's dorm lifestyle, enjoys life in her own special way.
"Correction, I guess Seo is more like a dog than a cat. Anyway, what're you doing here, really? Waiting for someone?"
"That is not the case. At this time, I am returning to my familial home."
So I said with a gloomy sigh.
Naomi-chan, who I've told the gist of what the Seo family is like, griefed as though praying to the heavens.
"Seriously? That's terrible, you wanted to go to the beach so badly, too!

Can't you just stay there for a day then leave?"
It's because I can't just leave the house because I'm a lazy cat on the sofa. And Naomi-chan misunderstood something. The thing I'm looking forward to isn't the summer sea, with swimsuits or sandy beaches or yakisoba, which completely clashes with the empty, greenless seaside.
"You really are depressed, aren't you? Why don't you try running away? You can do a fund-raising if you need money, and besides, you can just ignore what your parents are saying. This place would be really lonely without you, Seo. Look, can't you just say to your dad that you're sick, or you have a promise to keep, or something?"
Unfortunately, there is no lie that would work on my father.
The view I saw was one of Seo Shizune, crying in the middle of the workshop stinking of alcohol, wearing clogs and getting along dandy with the brewing rice. Once I saw that, I knew that the general outline can't be changed. At most, I can come back to the dormitory one or two days early.
"It's fine. Really, I just don't care anymore."
I sank back down on the sofa.
As though she couldn't just leave the lazy cat – or to her, the lazy dog – alone, Naomi-chan sighed and sat down in a chair close by.
"You sure give up easily, even though you're not the type to think ahead, Seo… well, once you're like this, you'll just ignore whatever I say. Are you leaving on the next bus?"
"If I don't hurry, I'll get home really late. By the way, Naomi-chan, is it coffee today?"
"Hmm? Um, it's tea. Why?"
"No reason. I don't know why I asked."
Naomi-chan nodded her head to the side in confusion, and she's not the only one. I sometimes ask about pointless, meaningless things. It's been a bad habit since childhood, but it's never gotten any better.
"Anyway, if you'll be lonely by yourself, can't you just go home too? You live in Hong Kong, right? Sounds fun."
"I'm not the same as you. I didn't sign up to leave, it's just too normal. Anyway, this is a good opportunity for Father, so I'll just head right into a lecture on proper upbringings."
She shrugged with a sigh.
Naomi-chan's dislike for Reien's regulations is exceeded by her dislike of her own father. From my perspective, they seem to be the type who get along by arguing, but in any case, she listens to her father's words and heads in the opposite direction.
For someone like Naomi-chan to return home, it's all about condition, condition, condition –

†

Having said that, she will leave the dormitory behind four days later, turning her bleached hair back to normal out of a sense of respect.
Leaving, because her ■■ brother was ■■.
Carrying a single bag, she left the dormitory quickly.

Without her makeup, no matter how you looked, she was an unembarrassed young lady, full of elegance.

†

What I heard and what I'm hearing.
What I saw and what I'm seeing, slowly coincided.
As I held back the inhuman sense of vertigo, Naomi-chan, hair still bleached, gave a painful smile.
"Thanks to the newcomer, my ranking dropped. Even if I can't make the top, if I don't at least get in the best three the Sisters will get annoying. I'm really studying hard, you know."
Naomi-chan's test scores keep the Sisters – or for that matter, the entire school – quiet about her bad behavior . The one who was endangering her was a newcomer who was admitted in the last days of June. I don't know her name, and besides, she's in a different class, so I haven't even seen her before. Though I've heard that she's 'difficult'.
"The newcomer, you mean the one who got the top place in the nationals? Why did someone like her enroll in a place like this?"
"Who knows. Apparently, she really wanted it. She was originally from Nagano. Though she's still living in the dorm mistress' room because of how sudden it was."
Hmph.
Maybe it's because I haven't met her directly, but I hadn't picked up on any of this… a flawless girl like that who is impervious to rumors , and a fake princess like me, are probably destined to never meet until never.
"Oh, by the way. Are you going home wearing your uniform, Seo? Why don't you change into something casual?"
"…It's fine. I don't have any other clothes. My father never sent me any."
As though I was so miserable to look at that she could no longer endure it, Naomi-chan jumped off the chair with a shocked face.
"You should've said that earlier, idiot! I'll give you some of my clothes, here!"
She pulled me away from the lounge.
Of course, as expected of Naomi-chan,
"That's that, and this is this. I'll lend you the clothes, so there's a few things I want you to buy for me."
'Here's the money,' and Naomi-chan gives me ten-thousand yen.
I think she means it's okay to spend the change.
Naomi-chan gave me the album title of an overseas band, the name of which alone would cause the Sister to faint. It's about a Rank A on the list of Reien's smuggled goods, but the condition of trade is pretty good.
"Well, all right. Though it's probably pointless."
"Why? The Sister is nice with you. She won't check your luggage."
"Um, it's not that… but whatever. I like that band anyway."
"Hm?"
That's just how lavish Naomi-chan is. If she couldn't resist and bought the album before even heading out, she probably would just give the rest of the

money to a friend.
As I sighed again at my petty bourgeois cunning, I hurried down the dormitory hall.
August third, nine-thirty A.M.
The future of the present me was exactly what I had seen three days before, an everyday without novelty.

2\

“Mikiya-kun, do you know about the Mother of Mifune?”
This was after a memorial party celebrating the completion of a hotel, the design of which our office was involved in.
Having returned to the dimly lit office, director Aozaki Touko, still wearing her dirtied evening dress, mentioned this delicately nostalgic name.

◇

August 3rd, clear sky.
The sun, so bright that just looking up will daze you, engulfed the skyscraper cityscape in moist heat.
Today’s temperature, fixed at ‘uncomfortable’, was the year’s highest recorded.
Summer, which had finally entered its peak, shaved off the possessions of its pedestrians. Water, naturally, not to mention composure, calmness, and even peace of mind.
The overflowing shadows of people passing by were the sparsest in one particular place, and it seems, not only because of the sun’s rays.
Having passed ten in the morning, the day was entirely presided over by the blue sky. This heat will probably continue until the evening, but of course, you can always take refuge in the air-conditioned buildings. It was the right choice to meet with Shiki at that intimately familiar place, cafe Ahnenerbe.
The vain search for the Mother of Mifune had ended, but at least this had the result of determining that the person I’m looking for isn’t here.
I headed to our rendezvous, moving from a small side street between the buildings not quite dark enough to be called an alley, to a larger road.
– The Mother of Mifune was a famous street fortune-teller from some time ago. I remember she used to set up shop around here until my second year of high school. There was nothing that I had needed from her, but the girls of the class fairly seriously depended on her, so if nothing else I remember that name.

There was a boom in fortune-telling at the time, but the woman called the Mother of Mifune had apparently been around for a long time, appearing frequently with her fortune-telling on a whim.
She wasn't a famous fortune-teller because of her appearance or the accuracy of her tellings. She was proficient not in telling the future, but in avoiding tragedies.
'You will soon be in a perilous situation with your lover. Two days from now, actually. What, you're still not fed up with him yet? You want to be together even though you have to compromise? Well, then go on a trip for three days. Alone. And don't forget the souvenirs.'
…And just like that, the tragedy would be completely averted with this sort of frank advice.
Despite this her fortune-tellings are, paradoxically, high-praised as 100% accurate. However, according to the sullen Mother of Mifune herself, 'I'm not predicting the future, so stop saying pointless things like that." After that, fans of hers stopped spreading rumors outside their own circle of friends, and she wasn't given higher praise than she deserved.
Even with her fame, recently there has been almost no news of her. Maybe she found a new haunt; maybe she was only a figure of legend in the minds of high school girls. The Mother of Mifune, who had been here two years ago, vanished without a trace.
"…Well, most of a fortune-teller's business is done at night. I wonder why Touko-san is interested in a fortune-teller…"
A constant booming sound shook my eardrums.
The corner just before the shortcut into Ahnenerbe was under construction. A section of the road was completely blocked off… I'm not a fortune-teller, but it would be better for this sort of work to be done at night if the road has a lot of traffic. Maybe it's because of the summer heat, but I'm complaining a lot for no reason.
After walking for about ten minutes, I reached the exit I remember by sight. A white light shone, so bright that for an instant it reminded me of waking up from sleep.
Unlike the small path covered by the shadows of other buildings, the sunlight was unforgiving on the road. The rays reflecting off the sides of buildings turned to heat, scorching the asphalt.
The road at noon flowed with all sorts of pedestrians.
As it was summer time, there were more teenagers in casual wear than workers in suits.
Each of them, with their different experiences of the same day, saw and took in the crowd, and processed it as a single view. It's the same with me. You would waste the entire day if you cared about every single person passing by.
Our lack of concern for the people around us may be a virtue twisted by modernisation, but that wasn't it. Of course, we always keep a certain distance when faced with others; otherwise we would lose focus of our own selves. This has been the truth all along. If you were empathic towards

everything else, you would fall from your place as the leading character. Because of this, even if the 'someone' passing by had a horrible expression, obviously you should ignore it to the best of your abilities to continue living life without hindrance… I guess this is common sense.
I know that I'm just an average person. But, if I purposely overlook someone clearly in trouble, I get the feeling that I failed to live up to my own standards.
For example.
If, right in front of the cafe I was heading to, there was a girl clinging to the arm of a man in his thirties and looking like she was about to cry, I have to try and do something.
There was a small empty spot in the road. The crowd avoided the pair, moving around them; the man, and the girl holding onto his arm, looked as though they were on a circular stage.
The man scolded her, sounding irritated, but the girl, her face a pale white, desperately pleaded with him about something.
Right, then. I lightly, calmly walked towards the stage.
It occurred to me that just a little while ago, two angry voices came together and told me off for being 'too soft'. But in this case, even if it wasn't me, I think someone else would intervene and try to settle things.
"Um, excuse me. What's going on here?"
Both the man and the girl turned to face me.
His irritated expression reversed, the man uncomfortably averted my gaze. The girl, teary-eyed, stared dumbly at the abrupt appearance of a third party.
"…What, do you know this girl?"
"Sorry, I'm just passing by. I might be intruding, but I couldn't just let this pass. Did something happen to her?"
I apologize for my impoliteness again, questioning him as gently as possible.
The man looked even more awkward. Judging from this, he doesn't seem to be a short-tempered person.
"What? Uh, nothing happened. I didn't – I was just walking, and this girl suddenly started hassling me."
The girl's head drooped at the man's words.
"…I'm sorry?"
….Strange.
It seems the one who was swept off by fate was not the girl, but the man. He was just holding a bag when suddenly, the girl started clinging onto it.
'Holding onto that bag isn't safe.'
The girl called out, stopping the man; he lost his temper when she refused to let go no matter what he said, and was just about to force the issue.
"Um… is that true?"
When I asked her, the girl nodded, replying 'yes' in a weak voice.
"You see? It's not like I wanted to argue with a kid. I'm the victim here."
"But, it's true! If you keep holding onto that bag, how should I put it… you'll be hurt in an accident. Um, to say it lightly, you'll get minced by a dump

truck!"
"This is summer, all right… take care of this weird girl for me, will you? I don't have *that* much time on my hands!"
He sounded aggravated, as though he couldn't tolerate the girl's constant attitude…. I take back what I said. He doesn't seem like a short-tempered person, but he doesn't have a great deal of patience, either.
"Please wait. People don't normally say these things without a reason, do they? Why do you think that will happen?"
"…"
She dropped her gaze and did nothing to explain herself, as though she felt guilty; she just desperately held onto the bag with her small hands. Even the defendant has given up hope.
Tired of her suspicious actions, the man pulled the bag away from the girl's hands.
"Are we done? I'll leave this to you. Tell her she should be thankful I didn't have to hit her!"
"Please, um, at least don't use the shortcut! Also, please reconsider your line of work!"
"Shut up! I'll call the cops, you stupid girl!"
The girl's shoulders shook with fear at the man's shout.
With a last disparagement and abuse, the man walked away angrily.
Now it's just me and the whimpering, short-haired girl.
"Are you okay?"
"Yes… um, I'm sorry. Thank you for coming here, you really helped me out."
She quickly lowered her head in a nervous bow. The gesture reminded me of a puppy.
"But please excuse me, I have to go after him! Even that horrible man has a family who will grieve for him!"
– Even as she became more crestfallen, the girl took hold of herself, and raised her face. A stranger had gotten angry with her. Even though she was scared, she still wants to chase after him, tears in her eyes.
"Hold on. If you stop him again, he won't hold back."
"Um… that's scary, but… I just, have to do what's right, or I'll be selling myself cheap."
"Well, that's a good attitude to have. But before you do that, let me ask one more time. Why do you think that man will be in danger?"
"Because -"
The girl hesitated again.
Crying not only because she was yelled at, but at a helpless sense of isolation,
"…Just, somehow. I have a good intuition. That man will get in an accident at the construction site ahead because of that bag; I just get that feeling."
the girl spoke from her heart, wearing the loneliest face in the world.
I know that face.
The hope, of wanting to be believed…
…and the despair, of knowing that no one will ever trust her.

Just one step short of tears, and desperately hoping for something to stop her in her tracks.
It was quite a while ago.
It was the rain-stricken face of the girl who cried out to the winter night that she couldn't do it.
"I'm surprised. Is that really intuition? I can see why he got angry."
"…!"
The girl began to speak, then frantically swallowed her words.
The way she hung her head after losing heart really reminded me of a puppy.
"But that *is* a problem. Is it alright if I talked to him instead?"
"Huh?"
I pointed my finger at the dumbfounded girl who raised her head again.
"You can stay here. It might complicate things if I brought you along. I'll report back if everything goes well."
"Um, wha, you, huh…?!"
Leaving the shaken girl behind, I went after the man.
I couldn't see him anymore, but if the girl's words are true, there's no way I can lose him. After all, the place he's heading to is the one I just passed moments ago.

3\

It was one hour after riding on the bus, leaving the outskirts of Reien and watching the view of the city.
When I got off at the bus stop and headed to the station, what greeted me were: the midsummer's rays, the hustle of the city which was nonexistent at the College, and the view of a nameless man, caught between a telephone pole and a dump truck, and crushed into ground meat.

↑

"- Oh."
I gulped at the deathly haze over my eyes.
How nice it would be if I could just put this reaction down to leaving the bus' freezer-like environment and stepping into the whirling heat outside.
It felt like everything inside my head was scooped out with a spoon and poured into a tank full of cider.
Beyond the foggy glass window, I could see the future part with the 'present' – I'm not sure which side I'm on. Am I the one with the scooped-out brain?

Or am I the one in the cider? In any case,
having not seen ‘someone else’s death’ for a long time, I think I came just short of a heart attack.
…Yes. I had carelessly forgotten. While dormitory life was boring, it was rarely dangerous, and I’d never seen the misfortunes of complete strangers at the College. Not like this.
I put in my utmost effort, and started breathing again.
Repugnance, moral compulsion, moderation, bravery – I felt a stinging pain in my sore throat as these feelings accosted me.
The nameless man, shouldering a large backpack, strutted off into the distance.
“Uh, ah, um…”
What should I do, what should I do, what should I do…!
Talk to him? Just let him be? He’ll definitely be angry. I don’t know his personality, but I saw the kind of work he does. Buying low and selling high – your typical upseller and swindler who forces his way to a sale. But I know that even this man has a home he cares for; no matter who the person is, he has a family.
Even as I became more hysterical, I felt disturbingly calm.
After all, I’ve been used to this ever since I was a child. Always getting shooed off by adults when I say these incomprehensible things, but in the end, the result is always the same. People just get mad at me, laugh at me; I don’t even know this man. If I just closed my eyes and turned away, I can be forgiven for not knowing anything… Of course. If I don’t get involved, then I wouldn’t know the result. I’m always the only one regretting it – I should just get over it and start closing my eyes more often. I keep telling myself that, but, well,
“Please, please wait!”
I’m always the only one regretting it – that’s painful in its own way, but it’s still better than someone else regretting it instead.
“You! Yes, you! The one with the big bag! Yes, the bad salesman!”
The crowd cleanly formed a wave.
Of course, image-wise I was the stone that had hit the water, and everyone else was the wave rapidly pulling away from me.
“…Huh?”
The salesman turned, staring with the most annoyed expression in the world.
“What, you talking to me?”
“Uh. I mean,”
My head went blank from the tenseness. I was already in a panic – I couldn’t say a word.
But every time I closed my eyes, I could still see the man turned into a poorly-done, cheap-looking, corner-store spread of dough.
Scraping up all the courage I had, I faced the nameless man.

↓

And of course, I failed as usual.
I failed, but – a really strange person cut in.

“Um, excuse me. What’s going on here?”
At that point, I was half full of shameless relief for the help, and half full of astonishment for his idiotically good nature.
…But no matter how dizzy I felt, or how much I could see the future, that was the wrongest word to use.
After all, there had never been someone like him who spoke to me in such a kind voice.
He talked calmly with the man, and with me, struck speechless.
Staying neutral to the end, he calmed down the irritated man, who left after a glare.
The only ones left were me, and the strange person.
The man, who I guess is older than me from the way he held himself, asked me ‘why’.
“…Just, somehow. I have a good intuition. That man will get in an accident at the construction site ahead because of that bag; I just get that feeling.”
I explained in a listless voice without even raising my head.
…How should I put it? It’s not that I wanted to get laughed at, but I felt that if I let even this person deride me, I’d die right on the spot. But,
“I’m surprised. Is that really intuition? I can see why he got angry.”
Of course , the result never changes.
He sighed with a shrug,
“But that *is* a problem. Is it alright if I talked to him instead?”
and laughed, in the same tone of voice as when I first saw him.
“Huh?”
“You can stay here. It might complicate things if I brought you along. I’ll report back if everything goes well.”
His footsteps echoed as he ran after the nameless man.
I stood stupefied in the middle of the road.
No matter how many times I blinked , I kept thinking back to the figure in black that had disappeared around the corner.
…Okay, let me think this through again. That wasn’t me deluding myself just now, it sounded very much like a lie but it wasn’t, I felt relieved when he said to leave it to him, but he told me to stay here, so I nodded when he said if it was all right that I miss the express, oh, but since I was looking down the whole time I didn’t actually see his face, and oh, *that’s* why I kept calling him ‘strange person’, and I quipped at myself – and a sudden sound, like fireworks, came from the bridge over the river, brought me back down to earth.
“Wha, ehh?”
Boom! An explosion! Everyone around me stopped and turned to look at the bridge.
How big of an explosion do you need for something that loud? There was definitely some kind of accident, but – what I saw was just an accident involving one person, not some big incident with police sirens in the distance.
But, maybe… that strange person believed me, and chased after the

nameless man. Then, at the spot of the road under construction, when the man's bag miraculously, coincidentally, got caught in the dump truck's gate, the strange person saved him just before he was rolled into something like bread. But it can't be that he tried too hard, and the dump truck lost control and went onto the bridge, and –
My knees shook as a feeling of nausea came, like I had tumbled onto the ground in a spin and fell into Hell.
I was still in this state when, with a 'hey' and a raised hand, the strange person… strange…?
"Thanks for waiting. It went exactly like you said. That really was pretty dangerous back there."
The man in the black glasses said, in an entirely harmless voice.
Finally, I raised my head and faced him.
– I want to die. Actually, I want to kill the me from five minutes ago. Why on earth did I call him a 'strange' person…!
"That man wasn't seriously injured. Well, he was hurt, but it was just a fall."
There was a big scratch on his left arm. Maybe, when it looked like the man was about to be crushed, he pulled the bag out of the truck by force and grazed it?
Even with such an obvious injury, the man in glasses didn't seem to mind.
My head was still blank from all the firsts that happened today.
The first time something I said was believed.
The first time I stopped something like this from happening.
And the first time –
"We really were fortunate. That man is probably still thanking you right now."
– someone said to me, 'you did great'.
He had just proudly approved of my own foolish self-complacency.
"-"
When I noticed, it was already too late.
The restraint, the dam I was holding back broke and they gushed out, flowing out from my eyes.
"Hey, hold – what's wrong…?!"
Panicking, he kept glancing at me. I guess it would be odd if he didn't panic after making a younger girl cry in public view .
With me the way I am, even though I felt bad for him I couldn't stop crying.
I rarely cry out of joy, and to be honest, I wanted to see him fluster.
The above is just about the end of the beginning.
It was the fateful meeting of I, Seo Shizune, and Kokutou Mikiya. *Thump-thump*

\Future Gospel (False)

Once, I had two worlds.
This was not a hallucination or a metaphor. I saw the exact same view simultaneously as two different worlds, like two monitors on the same desk.
The monitor on the left showed the world of the present. The view on the right showed the result.
I had lost all hopes, because I had wished for my objectives to become my future – my result.
Life holds no joy for one who does not understand the meaning of the unknown.
Success holds no sense of achievement for one who cannot ever fail.
I am certain that the future that I see cannot be changed.
I act for the sake of the result I see.
Like an automation, a machine without a will, moving back and forth in the space between left eye and right eye.
A man-made phantom which might appear to be constructing the future; in fact, it was only able to serve the future – just a vulgar degradation of God.
None of these were illusions nor hallucinations, but,
if they had all just been some kind of delusion, then maybe even I could have become a slightly better person.

†

Kuramitsu Meruka was a professional bomber.
He was a deconstructor who worked solely on outside orders. Or perhaps you should say he took from certain individuals inconfessable requests – an entertainer representing no loose ends. He himself did not feel that way; however, as long as there were people, a large audience, gathering at the scenes he created and expecting him to perform some act, then it can be called a stage. His audience mainly consisted of stern men in suits, but in their own ways they earnestly watched his work and repeated the same thanks. You could say that, next to some random bystanders, they were a far better class of customers.
Well – even though he was called a bomber, the jobs he performed haven't yet reached such a level of significance.
The explosives he handled were mainly for the destruction of buildings and construction sites – they were not meant for the taking of a life. He could probably make the right preparations if requested, but thankfully, remuneration worthy of murder has yet to be brought forth to him. What was asked of him were small-scale performances. For example, incendiary bombs made from a mix of aluminum powder and iron oxide, or chemical explosives made from fertilisers and engine oil. They were showy, but all of them had as much power as fireworks, just enough to fool children, and just enough to get the job done. It was still more than enough explosive force to kill one person, but in this country lives were still considered a priceless premium merchandise. Or at least that was what he without a doubt believed in.
His role was similar to a stage jack. He was employed to go to a certain stage and ruin it; he simply, secretly switched the leading roles from the distinguished artist to the screaming, fleeing crowd. Explosives were nothing

more than props used to incite the people. It was merely that explosives were the equipment which could make the best use of those delusions he called *seeing the future* .
I have no expectations for the future, and no hope for it.
Yes – it wasn't a hallucination or a metaphor. He had the power to 'foresee the future.'
He realized at a fairly early stage that his vision was different from that of others.
He could watch the future like a film.
This peculiarity was more than enough to unhinge the life of any one person.
For example, this was one of his points of achievement.
For students in their school life, it is normal to have the objective of achieving test results.
He could see his ideal score in his right eye.
At the same time, the methods by which that result can be actualised – the present – is projected in his left eye.
The future wasn't something you saw like a dream.
Ever since he was young, he had understood that the future was something you built upon resolute intentions.
There was a problem – the fact that, with the film he watched with his right eye, every single current action could be determined.
He wasn't watching the future.
What he saw reflected in his right eye was not the future; it was nothing more than the 'obvious result' from five minutes later, or a day later, or a month later.
He was simply gazing at the result created from the accumulation of the present, belatedly –
This truth deprived Kuramitsu Meruka of his human emotions.
He had no expectations for the future. Nothing but the obvious could occur in his life.
He had no hopes for the future. Nothing that he does not know about can occur.
And – paradoxically, there was no value in the present.
Once he had clarified how to bring forth the future result he wished for – regardless of how many hardships may beset that choice – there is no reason for him to select any other choices.
It was like a test's answer sheet with all the blanks filled in.
As soon as the future is seen, the measures necessary to fulfill it are projected in his left eye.
As long as he acts according to that image, the film playing in his right eye will always become the unchangeable future.
Huh. So life is this boring.
Thus, Kuramitsu Meruka began feeling estranged from society, naturally becoming isolated and arriving at his current present.
As long as he is compensated, he will see a job through, from the first bomb warnings all the way to the actual deed. He went down this line of work

from a small coincidence when he had needed some petty cash; now, he managed about three cases a year.
Of course, he wouldn't be here in the first place if there wasn't a demand for this type of work. As the Japanese police organisation is excellent, anyone who actually attempted a bombing can be arrested with little effort. After that, the only thing left would be getting testimonies – asking questions like, 'who was your client?' It really wasn't worth the trouble. Kuramitsu Meruka was just a fantasy, a laughable urban legend.
Kuramitsu himself thought this way.
However, after the first case, an appeal came for one more performance; there was a second case. The winds changed when he was referred to for the third case.
Not only did the bomber act according to the orders, he could even manage a brilliant escape from the investigators.
His identity was unknown. In the first place, a bomber has neither a secret bastion nor a backing organisation, and undertakes requests from a mobile phone. This is not even mentioning that, with money being the only objective, he wouldn't even know the background of his clients. This bomber did not wish for public awareness. Self-respect means nothing to me – this sort of attitude probably conformed to the needs of current societies. Before he realised it, he was surviving entirely based on this job, and became a professional bomber.
Hey. It's dangerous over there.
– Was the meeting between them a gift from Heaven, or divine retribution?
On the way back from a job, a girl wearing a kimono called out to him.
The job itself was the same as usual – sabotage due to personal grievances. He was to disrupt the dedication ceremony of a certain hotel. Destroy a single floor; furthermore, there must be no casualties.
Something large-scale like an entire floor would take time, but it was feasible. As the hotel was empty except for the people invited to the dedication ceremony, similarly, there was no security posted on the floors near the roof.
He wished for the result he sought, and simply acted based on the vision. Thus, exactly as his right eye saw, the hotel was wrapped around by black smoke.
Five minutes before that, he had stopped by the hotel's garden, in order to confirm the result. The girl had said that to him. 'That hotel is dangerous.' It seemed that she slipped away from the ceremony and was basking in the night wind.
A slight sense of discomfort. Curiosity. Secret anticipation.
Having confirmed the explosion of the hotel, he left the girl, scrutinizing his own churning emotions.
Once the hotel incident had settled, he investigated the ceremony's participants, and found out about the girl from that day.
Her name was Ryougi Shiki.
That name was one that he had not seen that day – no, it was the first time a

name appeared that hadn't already been in his right eye.
This would be the first and last time Kuramitsu Meruka acted as a bomber for objectives other than money.
The chance that his identity was exposed.
Evading the danger posed by his face having been seen.
With these human-like sentiments, it must be ascertained whether or not he can kill this girl.

†

"A bomber is coming after you?"
Aozaki Touko said, looking not so much in doubt as in complete disbelief.
It was evening at Garan-no-Dou. Ryougi Shiki was already regretting her decision to discuss this with Touko, having aimed for the small space of time when Kokutou Mikiya was absent.
"He's not really coming after me – more like he's following me around… I haven't said anything to Kokutou, though."
"Ooh? So you caught someone's eye during the hotel incident? I guess even weirdos can be popular, huh?"
"It's not funny. Look at this. It was in my mail slot this morning. Now I even have a cellphone for him to call me with."
It has been three days since the explosion at the hotel. Her troubles with the bomber were now nearly daily events.
The first time, it was a flashbang-like explosive at a construction site.
The second time, it was an incendiary landmine planted on a road near Ahnenerbe.
The third time, it was a timed bomb for demolition purposes, placed in the ruins of a purposeless abandoned building.
It was a small comfort that all these acts of sabotage occurred in deserted places, targeting only the annoyed Ryougi Shiki. While there have been no witnesses, there have also been no victims.
The target, Shiki, also managed to leave the bomb site alive and unscathed every single time.
"The other side won't stay quiet after you've ignored so many attacks. So, have you gotten a call yet?"
"Not even once. But more importantly, there's something wrong with this guy, Touko."
"What do you mean by that?"
"He can see way too far ahead. The third time was at an abandoned building that I just went to on a whim. When I got to the second floor, there was a cheap-looking alarm clock sitting in the middle of the room. As soon as it clicked to zero there was an explosion."
At that point, it wasn't just a coincidence – it was an inevitability.
Aozaki Touko, suddenly feeling interested by this bomber, had Ryougi Shiki stutter out her indirect impression of him from the three bombings.
It seems – this bomber is like a moving corpse.
The meaning of this phrase could not be understood by Aozaki Touko. The instincts of Ryougi Shiki were too animalistic – *impressions* that cannot be

shared by others.
Aozaki Touko only responded to the point that 'he could see too far ahead.'
"I've heard about this bomber. At the time, I thought it might have been true, but – it might be a type of precognition."
Touko searched the desk distractedly.
"I bought it for you, Chief. You said a pack of Peace is fine, right?"
The sole employee returned with excellent timing.
Seeing the way Aozaki Touko's eyes lit up as she received the cigarettes, Ryougi Shiki sighed, realizing that this was the beginning of another long talk.
It was the third of August.
Ryougi Shiki, together with Kokutou Mikiya, searched for a fortune teller supposedly close by.
It was a suggestion from the director, Aozaki Touko.
According to her, it was very possible that the fortune teller calling herself the Mother of Mifune possessed an imitation of precognition, and also possible that she was in fact the mentioned bomber.
"Well, in all likelihood she's completely unrelated. It's pointless for Kokutou, but go see her if you can. You should be able to get a feel for what kind of people seers are if you meet them directly."
As Touko had predicted, the girl soon encountered the fortune teller.
She came out in the afternoon, in an alley between two buildings just wide enough for one person.
The Mother of Mifune looked exactly like what thousands of people would think as the typical fortune teller. A black veil covered her face, and she had a crystal ball for the sake of pretense. While she was physically well-built, she was beyond her fifties.
"Me, a bomber? You must think I'm stupid. I work with love and dreams – the kind of advice that sells well to young people. I've got nothing to say to a killer like you."
Strangely, despite her cold treatment, the old woman did not inspire any animosity. Shiki exchanged words with her for about two minutes, then turned her back on the fortune teller.
"This helped. I don't know if you can really see the future or not, but I understand how your kind thinks now."
"…Well, aren't *you* getting cheeky . Just what do you think you know about me? If you're looking for a fight, then let's have a go at it. I can start by teaching you some 'facts' about this person you love so much that you would pick fights with him for no reason at all."
The old woman's slacking face shaped into an unpleasant smile.
"-"
An uncontrollable urge to kill clouded Shiki's face, but in the end, she did not see the death of the old woman.
"My, you're kinder than I expected. Looks like my guess was wrong about you. That wasn't very nice just now – how about I give you some friendly advice this time?"

“…Don’t. That was enough. Live as long as you can, old woman. It’s dangerous at night out here; it’s no place for the elderly.”
“Goodness, such dashing words in this day and age! I might just fall for this fine young man! Tell me, have we met before? Stay for a while, I’ll give you some special service!”
“No, we haven’t. Don’t go being a fortune teller if you’re just trying to find a guy.”
She left the alley behind.
To the girl in the kimono with fluttering hands, she said,
“Really now? That’s unfortunate. By the way, the bridge is bad luck. Be careful… well, I guess you wouldn’t die from something like that.”

↑

Ryougi Shiki parted with the fortune teller. As time wasted away in the bustle of the city, a tone she would never be able to get used to began to sound.
Without a break in her stride, she took out the cellphone given to her by the bomber.
“Good afternoon. I believe this is our first meeting, Ryougi-san.”
A high-pitched voice was coming through a voice changer. It was impossible to determine age or sex.
“How is this a first? You’ve already seen me a few times close up, haven’t you?”
“Of course not. All I do is set the bombs. There’s no reason for me to appear before you. Even now, I am talking from a house far away.”
“A meddler and a liar too, huh? Well, whatever. What do you want? If you’re just here to talk, find someone who knows how to listen. I’ve got nothing to say to you.”
“Even though I’m trying to kill you? …What a strange girl. Aren’t you going to ask, ‘why, why me?'”
“What, you mean you’ll tell me if I asked? If you’re going to play as the mysterious stranger, then shut up. Besides, I’m not interested in you. I can’t get worked up fighting a corpse. If you try anything, I’ll just have to squash another annoying bug.”
“……How composed. I hadn’t seen that reply coming.”
The voice became weaker, yet seemingly happier.
The bomber began to accumulate ‘truths’.
Ryougi Shiki will embrace death in two minutes.
Even now, his right eye is watching the ‘result.’
Shiki, walking on the bridge, is caught by the blast of an explosive hidden on a parked truck. The bomber is watching through his precognition, waiting intently in his front-row seat.
“Perhaps you think that you cannot be killed? That the future is your ally?”
“Who knows? I won’t know until I get to that part. But I’m still alive right now.”
“You’ll die, you know. You will. You’ll be caught in an explosion and die. This is decided. I can see all futures . The future I see absolutely cannot be

changed."
"- Heh. So that's your type of precognition, huh."
Somehow, there was a tint in Ryougi Shiki's voice.
Faint delight. Not joy, but rapture. Not happiness, but pleasure – as though saying, what delicious prey. Like a wild beast licking its lips, a wintry yet voluptuous tone.
"…Ha. It's obvious that you won't believe me. You people can't understand my perception. The future I see is absolute. Completely. It's the same as a formula. Once you know the variables, the answer cannot be altered."
Reality is a thing that cannot be determined by formulas.
It is a fluctuating value that cannot be fixed until the answer is given.
However – if you could determine the variable, then the answer becomes unshakable.
That was the precognition of the bomber, Kuramitsu Meruka .
In order to actualise the 'successful future' that he saw, he weighed together the variables called reality.
There was no place for his own free will. Interests, emotions – it was pointless to insert any of these wishful observations.
…That's right, once you can see what is correct, you can do no wrong – even if he feels no happiness from his present actions, he cannot go against the vision of the 'successful future.'
By seeing the future, he has limited his own past.
Moving in the space between present and future – a slave only for the purpose of actualising the future. That was the precognition of Kuramitsu Meruka .
"…An unchangeable future, right? I shouldn't be saying this myself, but – is that fun for you?"
"…Who knows? For almost six years now, the thing called a will did not exist in me. I'm a machine entangled in a future already seen. Is my left eye the real me? Or is it my right eye? Or am I just a ghost floating between them? To be honest, I don't know myself."
Ryougi Shiki crossed the bridge.
A truck placed with explosives was parked three meters before her.
There were no passing cars. There was a pedestrian at the end of the bridge, but even then the only result was burns on the left arm.
" – Did you think it was fun to wind me up?"
"I don't have excesses like that. You saw my face. That is reason enough for me to kill you. Now, I will dispose of you from far away, as an unknown stranger."
"That's a bad lie. You're really close by, aren't you?"
The bomber caught his breath.
His extended finger shook as it hovered over the remote, ready to light the fuse.
"I said I wasn't there."
"Yes, you are. You said you saw the future by weighing together variables, right? So, you have to be watching me right now for you to see ahead."

That was the deciding difference between what he possessed and a precognition which predicted *only* the future.
“You can’t create the future by being an indirect third party.
You have to match it with the actual scene . That is the condition of your precognition.”
“-”
As he determined the future by measuring the factors of reality, even if he understood the result, he must see ‘that instant’ himself. The future he saw was his own view – that was the absolute condition.
That was why he had failed three times.
For the first, second, and third attempts, he only saw ‘a future where he placed explosives in a place he lured Ryougi Shiki to’. He did not directly see a vision of her dead body. He thought it would be enough to use a situation where any normal person would be killed.
As a result, Ryougi Shiki lived on.
As long as a future containing her death was not seen, she can live on as normal – !
“That’s why you’re definitely close by. Your precognition won’t hold unless you can see my dead body.”
One more step. Ryougi Shiki approached the bed of the truck.
The bomber activated the fuse.
Oxidisation occurred within a second, as the incendiary bomb’s blast spread.
The area shook with the explosion, and other smaller blasts and black smoke.
Ryougi Shiki was hit from the side by the blast.
So far, it was according to his vision. The bomber’s precognition can never be wrong. Yet – he still cannot see the ‘future form’ of the bloodied, charred girl.
– *What is* with *that girl?*
On the roof of an office building five hundred metres away, he was watching the bridge that had become the scene of a bombing.
The encamped bomber clearly saw it with his left, true eye.
The way she, in an instant, leapt towards the river and fell, while the blast wrapped around her.
There were the sounds of a crowd and the sirens of patrol cars.
In its midst, the floating body of the girl rose, swimming calmly towards the riverbank.
– For an instant, he was sure that their eyes met.
The girl walked away from the bank. ‘I finally found you.’ Her lips, twisting into a leer, clearly said that she would now slowly, surely, catch and kill her prey.
The bomber shook off the horror that had paralysed his thoughts, and moved away from the office building.
This conclusion was also one he had included as foreseeable.
When he could not see the girl’s ‘corpse ’, he prepared the next future.
– She’s coming. It’s all thanks to her surviving the bridge. Now, finally –

Even horror was being overwritten by his trust in his success.
It would be in a multi-storey parking lot fifteen minutes from now.
He could vividly see the form of Ryougi Shiki there, torn to pieces.
The precognition of the bomber was absolute.
Fifteen minutes later, as though the world itself had suddenly ended, she will die.
The precognition of Kuramitsu Meruka was not a thing of probability, but an inevitability matched with reality.
That was the order of this world. It would be impossible for anyone to go against this flow of events.

Future Gospel \

1

And so on and so forth – let's keep that girlish train of thought in check.

◇

"I see. So that's why it turned out like that."
The man with the blackish-green glasses wore a troubled smile. He listened carefully to what I said, amazed at how I started crying in the middle of the traffic. Or not – he was seriously concerned about me.
I'm not the important one here, I just have to worry about this girl – that's what his voice said. A voice, more so than an image, can make my mind dizzy – it's an affinity I have originating from a previous life.
"Maybe we should take a break at that cafe up ahead, if it's alright with you. You must be tired, too."
He was pointing to a fortress-like cafe, with a hanging sign in German. Um, I think it's read Ahnenerbe. It seemed like a stern place, but that's still much better than talking while standing up.
"Um, yes. T-Thank you very much!"
I held back those shameful, overflowing tears of mine, and nodded.
For an instant, the snake called wariness rose its head, but after thinking for a bit, it lost its interest and coiled back to sleep.
Even though the man had said nothing but pick-up lines, how can someone who was the very picture of harmlessness have ulterior motives? No,

actually, even if he did it would probably work out pretty well. That's the state of mind I'm in right now.
I know that even though I'm a coward, in this regard I'm very open – I want to do something about this personality.
"If, if it isn't too much of a bother – I, I have something I want to say, too…! That is, well, there's still over one hour until the next train, so!"
My tears have stopped, but my heart is now running straight into the day after tomorrow. Seeing my red face and the way I flustered, the man gave another light troubled smile.
"Well, since I said I'd reward you, it's my treat. And oh, we still haven't greeted each other yet."
He gave a belated, simple self-introduction.
His name was Kokutou Mikiya. The instant those sounds reached my ear,
" – I look forward to this year with you, Seo-san."
I felt them disappear into the depths of my daze – things as yet unseen, voices as yet unheard of.

◇

Cafe Ahnenerbe was decorated by antiques; anyone would feel calm in this dark dim space. There were no electric lights, with the interior being lit solely by the sunlight from outside, like the chapel of a church.
"…Um, there aren't really many customers, are there?"
"That's true – and it's before noon, too."
Mikiya-san gave a strained smile, as though it was a personal matter.
…Incredible. I think his appearance has actually turned on its head and reached a criminal level of harmlessness.
"Looking the way it does, it's probably hard for a first time visitor to come in. It's a shame, because the coffee and the cakes are both delicious… oh, I see. Would you prefer a brighter shop, Shizune-chan?"
"Shizu-"
Didn't he just say something incredible right now in a very natural way?!
"N-No, not at all! I could get used to this mood! In fact, it's very calming!"
"That's good. Let's go find a seat by the windows."
As though enticed by those sweet words, I lowered myself into a seat by the windows – opposite of Kokutou-san.
"- Eheh, heh."
By hiding my embarrassment, my face instead became one of utmost stupidity.
"?"
I quickly straightened out my grin. Haven't I already disposed of this peacefully sodden mindset earlier? I shook my head from side to side quickly, switching out my emotions.
It wasn't because I was tired that I agreed to Kokotou-san's kind words. It was because I had something I wanted to ask from this person I've never seen before, that I would muster my courage and do something like breaking school regulations –
"Here's the menu. The coffee here is hotter than usual, so be careful if you're

going to order it. Today's special is… huh, same as yesterday. That's too bad. The blueberry would've made a perfect recommendation."
– was what I had *wanted* to do.
Seeing the way the discouraged young man clicked his tongue, my face slackened again.
"Ah – n-no, no no!"
"???"
Like I said, that's not what I'm here for!
He's a stranger that I've just gotten to know about ten minutes ago.
I summoned my courage to talk to someone who normally I would walk away from after giving thanks; but this definitely wasn't because of a childish impulsiveness. In some vague way, I felt a curious connection to this Kokutou Mikiya.
It wasn't like those 'usual scenes' that I was intimately familiar with; it felt like I was groping in the dark, trying to confirm something's shape – something like an instinctual feeling of ordinariness, a feeling that I had left behind in my childhood.
Kokutou-san ordered coffee, and I asked for an iced cocoa.
In the awkward silence that descended after ordering our drinks, I turned off my emotions. I felt a gaze, like I was being controlled by the me from five minutes later, making sure that I wouldn't be hurt no matter what answer I may receive.
By the time I saw the soft brown color of our drinks placed before us, I was a completely different person from before. My two selves are independent. Even though I'm still myself, there isn't a time, a string connecting us at all.
"I wanted to ask you about before . Why did you believe in me, Kokutou-san?"
Without touching my drink, I put forth a question, looking directly at him.
To him, it might have been just a stranger's problem, something he didn't really need to care about.
But to me, it was a matter of life and death.
If he ends the conversation with a joke, I'll probably feel really let down, and spend the next week in depression, but at the least, I'll have bid farewell with gratitude.
"Even if you ask me why, it's hard to answer… hmm. Isn't it alright if I said it was because you were trying so hard?"
"So it was because you pitied me?"
I was being mean, turning it against him.
If that was why he had looked at me, then there's no way he would've chased after the man. It was because he believed me that he chased after him… Even though I know this, I wanted to try him.
Kokutou-san considered it for a while, as though carefully scrutinizing .
"I think there was some pity, too. At first, I made the mistake of thinking you were being threatened. But in the end, that's only my personal circumstances.
At that point, the only thing I understood was that Shizune-chan had no

reason to lie. It didn't seem like you had anything to gain by deceiving him. In which case, that would mean this girl is seriously worried about that man. The authenticity of the accident and so on aside, it was hard to ignore it."
And well, something kind of came to mind – Kokutou-san gave a strained smile.
"It's not a lie, so you believed me? So you're just saying it's good intuition – isn't that a lie and an excuse, too?"
"Well, even if it's like a lie, you were serious, weren't you? If I can believe in the beginning of something, then that's enough… and, well, I'm getting used to these kinds of stories lately."
I'll trust, not in the contents of the story, but in the essence of the person telling it, said Kokutou-san.
…That was enough. I, Seo Shizune, took a deep breath, becoming so calm that even I myself wasn't sure what to think of it; I opened up to him about this worry that I have fostered for many years.

◇

" I can see the future."
As I had expected, Kokutou-san looked shocked at my blunt confession, and sipped from his coffee while it was still black.
"T-This kind of talk is just weird, isn't it?!"
Actually, the one that's weird is me!
" – No, being surprised is just my personal circumstances, so don't worry. More importantly, what do you mean by seeing the future? Can you really watch it like a movie?"
Unexpectedly, Kokutou-san became more serious, leaning forward slightly as though urging me to continue.
"Um, yes. Like a movie, or maybe I should say it's like my view just gets switched over as-is. It's like a daze, really."
"Even now?"
"No, it's not like I'm always seeing it. Most of the time, it suddenly happens with no warning – it feels like a light being switched on, and then the view just slips into a different one -"
… it's hard to explain the "view of the future" in words.
I fall into a daze, and after a blink of an eye , I can gaze at 'events which will now happen' in an objective way – despite this, I feel like I'm *looking behind myself* .
It's an uncomfortable feeling, as though I'm seeing the view projected into the back mirror, seeing myself in that view.
"…Time would feel like it's going by awfully slowly. But it's actually just a daze for about two seconds – I've been starting to think that maybe time is actually moving forward and turning back…"
That is because all times advance in parallel with each other when the observer watches the future.
The view of the man's accident from before was a film almost ten minutes long, but in fact I had grasped it in the time it took for me to blink.
"And when did this start?"

While it was taking all my effort just to try and explain, in contrast, Kokutou-san was infinitely calm.
“I realized when I was in middle school that I was seeing the future. When I was a child, I didn’t know what I was seeing, and I don’t think it was ever as precise as it is now.”
“Well, that’s a small mercy… would be a rude thing to say. Children have hardships of their own. I can only guess what it was like, but there were many painful things, weren’t there? You must be very enduring, Shizune-chan.”
” _ ”
…Oh no, now I feel like crying – being all shamefully flustered again. It’s sad, and painful, but even more so, it was happy and difficult.
I haven’t felt this much pain since the winter of two years ago. It was the same as when I came home and saw a childhood friend – my Shiba, Chris, on his deathbed.
The chill I felt that time is still burned into my heart.
Chris was waiting until I got home.
The next morning, Chris passed away sleeping, not in his dog house, but as though he was out of sight.
As I watched that view, I couldn’t change the future. I noticed that, even if I brought him to the clinic, even if I spent the entire night with him, the fact that Chris would be on his deathbed wouldn’t be swayed. The only thing I could do was watch Chris as he ended the way he wanted, and cry.
I kept crying that night, from the grief of Chris’ death, and from happiness in that he would wait for me; the next morning, when I saw Chris in the now, I cried again. I had to bear these painful memories, just once more than other people.
This person made me remember all this without even referring to it.
” – Um, please!”
Maybe it was an uncontrollable enthusiasm, or an impulse, but something suddenly pushed up and I raised my voice. Across the iced cocoa which I still haven’t touched yet, I discovered our enemy.
What is it? Kokutou-san raised his face.
“I, I don’t mean anything by this…!
But, well. Would you mind if, um, if I called you Mikiya-san from now on?!”
It’s like my heart or my tongue became a tattered old pocket watch.
In response to my stiff voice, Mikiya-san said, all right.
Yes! The gear in my heart climbed another step.

2

“It’s rude of me to discuss this with someone I’ve just met, but… will you listen to what I have to say?”
The girl, with an expression filled with tension, said that there was something she wanted to discuss.

She was crying earlier too, and it was me who invited her to the cafe anyway, so I gave her a single reply.
“If you’re fine with me. I might not be much help, though.”
For a long time now, I’ve been weak against girls who seem crushed by something unseen.
“Please don’t laugh… to be honest, I can see the future.”
Despite having somehow managed to prepare myself, I was still shocked when she spoke again.
The feeble way she confessed this, straining her voice out from her throat, made the strength of her determination all the more conspicuous. Shyly, as though she was taking a peek at me, Shizune-chan confessed her worry.
She was talking about something as inexplicable as precognition to someone she had just met, not to mention an older person of the opposite gender.
She looked remarkably like she’s about to explode, so it was obvious
“I, I don’t mean anything by this…!
But, well. Would you mind if, um, if I called you Mikiya-san from now on?!”
that her speaking out like this, with her face completely red, was something that came from her extreme tension.
“Sure, it’s better to use an easier name.
Now, about that precognition… how far ahead can you see?”
“R-Right! Um, well, I can see about three days ahead if I can see it as a scene. Sometimes, they’re less like scenes and more just images, and flow right past me; I can see one month ahead, or at worst, one year ahead with those.”
“So even with the future you see, there are different levels, huh… which do you see more often?”
“…I see the scenes from three days ahead about two, three times a day. The one with that man before was in this type, too. On the other hand, the fragmented ones really only come once in a while.”
“……”
I can see it, the girl murmured.
With her feeble words just now, and the contents of our conversation up to this point, I think I can understand Shizune-chan’s worry.
She was carrying a sense of alienation similar to guilt.
Having experienced events like that of today countless times, she feared trespassing into other people.
Before she even trusts or distrusts someone, by seeing the future, she can do something equivalent to ‘peeking’ into that person’s life; she was blaming herself for this.
With both advantages and disadvantages, she can see the future; it was a special talent other people did not have. However, she did not acknowledge it as a benefit. In fact – even though she was more special than others, she possessed a feeling of inferiority.
“…This is hard stuff. I don’t really know, but are there any good things you see in the future?”
“That’s not it… say, with the contents of a test, or when a senior is about to

call me, I know all these things before they happen, so I'm an honor student at school. Just a while ago I was at the top of my year… It's strange, isn't it? It's not even because I'm smart."
Friends who are diligent and hard-working.
The girl murmured, as though conscientiously apologizing to her steadily growing list of friends.
Seeing the future is a foul play; she was blaming herself for always cheating.
"…I see. I guess you can say this ability is too much for one person to control."
"Yes. It's wasted on someone like me."
Shizune-chan nodded dejectedly.
…However, the roots of her worry run deeper than this. She did not put it into words, but maybe the reason for her gloom is because of her resignation towards the fact that the future is decided.
For example, if the world was a long picture scroll, then one cannot remain proactive if looking ahead by oneself.
It wasn't a farsightedness which came from having known the future.
It was the uttermost sense of alienation – isn't it many times more frightening to be alone *outside of the scroll* ?
"I want to ask you one thing. Shizune-chan, are you afraid of seeing the future?"
"…I don't know. It just comes so naturally to me that by itself, seeing the future isn't good or bad. It's just… I'm afraid of seeing a future I can't do anything about."
For example, her own death.
For example, the death of an irreplaceable neighbor .
Certainly, no one would want to see something more than once if it is *unchangeable* .
"But you haven't ever seen something like that before, right?"
"Oh, um… yes. When it was my dog, It was like I just somehow knew… because it wasn't an accident. But accidents like today's are scary. It's lonely to be able to see the death of someone you know.
…That's probably why I'm always scared, or depressed. In the end though, that's all someone else's business, and I'm never confident in myself, I guess you can say I just falter around – aha, it's really messed up, isn't it. It's pretty vague even to me whether I'm scared or not… I wonder why. Maybe it's because I've always been scared of it, so I've just gotten used to it."
The burden she couldn't clearly express in words weighed heavily on the girl's shoulders.
"It's not scary. It's just – "
"Yes? Just?"
Shizune-chan raised her face, looking blank.
…Well.
I couldn't bring myself to have her speak the conclusion now, and more importantly, it wouldn't be any sort of solution.
She mustered all her courage and opened up completely about her worry, so

I'll have to do whatever I can to help as well.
"No, let's leave that until the end. Could you continue with how you can see the future?"
I've already heard about what her precognition is, and how far ahead she can predict. The only remaining question was the conditions. I can't attach a reason to the precognition, and I've already been taught regarding that topic quite some time ago.
"For example, let's go back to the man from before. Since that was your first time meeting him, is this also your first time in the city, Shizune-chan?"
"No, I've come to Fumine many times. It's closer to my school compared to other cities."
"So you came today by train?"
"No, by bus from Chounodai. I got here at around eleven o'clock, and I felt dizzy right away."
"…If you came from Chounodai by bus, then you're going the same way as me… how did you get to know that man?"
"I talked to him after seeing the future. Before that… um, how did it go… maybe… we passed each other at the bus stop. But, mmm…"
"You felt dizzy right after you got off at the bus stop, right? So maybe, that man got on the bus together with you, and he got off first."
"Oh. Now that you mention it, yes, I think so!"
"I see. To borrow what Touko-san said, there's coherence."
"Sorry?"
Ignoring the way Shizune-chan tilted her head to the side, I took out a business card from my wallet, and scribbled a sentence on the back.
"??"
I placed the business card with its front facing up on the table without looking at Shizune-chan, who appeared more and more mystified.
– Now then. I'll have to ask the last question. I hope I can do it well like Touko-san.
"This took pretty long, but one last question.
Shizune-chan, is it scary that you can see the future?
Or is it scarier that the future is decided?"
Eh – Shizune-chan's eyes became round.
After troubling over it for a while, Shizune-chan, holding the glass of ice cocoa with both hands,
"…They're both scary. But it's the latter, I think."
pouted, and answered with uncertainty .
"Well, that's a relief. As the elder who you sought advice from, I will assert something; Shizune-chan, you're completely wrong about what you're worrying about, so you should be more proud of yourself. If that's the kind of future you see, then you should see it all the time."
"Wha?! B-b-but, but I don't want that! Mikiya-san, did you listen to what I was saying – ?!"
"Of course. As I hear it, your precognition isn't something bad. Well, the world is a big place, there's probably at least one troublesome person who

would peek into the future. But your precognition isn't like that, Shizune-chan."
"Sorry?"
There is no good and evil to an ability, but even I can distinguish, for a human life, which side this ability will work for.
"You see, there are several types of precognition.
I got this from someone else, but – "
And so, I spoke about the interpretation of precognition that I heard just a few days ago.

†

Astoundingly overdue wages. The financial situation of the employee should be left to his own discretion; this controversial statement from the chief was withdrawn just before moving into August. It was the end of July. The fact that our company, Garan no Dou, is also in the business of architectural design, became the income source that saved us.
The advance deposit came from a certain high-class hotel. Apparently, it's not in Fumine, but a city two prefectures away.
'Oh. Come to think of it, didn't you take on some odd jobs before we settled down here?'
Overjoyed at the sudden income, Chief Aozaki Touko gave the sole employee, Kokutou Mikiya, the job payment as a completion bonus; all the while, she was recalling the headache of having completely forgotten about the open-heartedness of a superior.
Perhaps on a whim, the high-spirited Aozaki Touko, accompanied by her employee and Employee's Friend A, attended the dedication ceremony – something she would normally keep a distance from; they returned to the office after getting involved in an unexpected event at the venue.
A few days passed. Aozaki Touko and Employee's Friend A were discussing what would later become the conclusion.
"Apparently, there was a letter of responsibility from the criminal at the scene of the crime. The time of explosion and the scale of damage, the number of victims and even the details of their injuries; these were all accurately recorded. The police are seeing it as a bomb warning, but I'm not so sure about that. The contents were quite simple. If I had to, I would say it's more like a report."
"…A report, huh. So you mean, he didn't create a disturbance because of a grudge against the owner or as some kind of criminal philanthropy, but because it was just a job?"
"I guess the side that hired this 'bomber' had some humane expectations as well. Resource wars are harsh in every line of work. A direct attack would be too hasty, harassment can have its effectiveness – well, these are unrelated concerns to the perpetrator.
The problem is, why this outside order is still catching up to us, even though it was established as having no loose ends. Shiki, where did you go that night?"
"Nowhere. I just went out because the view was bad. More importantly, that

letter – it's *predicting the future* , isn't it."
The repeated bomb threats, and their reenactment.
The skill that was shown in deceiving the police pursuit and escaping the net, exceeded the definition of an ability possessed by a single person.
The actions of the bomber, evading the capabilities of the organisation known as the police force, cannot be explained as anything other than some sort of a miracle.
To speak unrealistically, the bomber possessed invisibility, or a hundred faces.
To speak within the bare minimum of reality –
"It's a precognitive ability. It would take a wielder of precognition to know the image of the future beforehand."
The magus – the one with privilege against common sense, spoke over her shoulder, unpleasantly.

↑

"Chief, are there really precognitive abilities?"
"There are. There are a lot of different kinds, so they are all put together under the same label. At its most fundamental, it is just an abnormal ability to 'see'. Exchanging signals with the future, or seeing a future then shifting into a parallel world – we won't include the fakes. This man is probably a born psychic, so this is different from a magecraft divination, or religious prophecy.
When it comes to precognition based only on the functions of humans, they are divided into the two categories of prediction and calculation. The great majority possess *predictions* of the future. At a high level, the contents of their predictions playback in their minds like a clip."
"…Hold on. If that's true, then wouldn't this bomber be hard for even the police to catch?"
"It would be easy for the police. They just need to widen their nets. No matter what kind of future you see, there is a limit to the capabilities of one person. Assuming you can't take to the skies, you can't escape from society. But the police gave out too much information. They are an easy opponent to see for someone with precognition. At its current scale, the headquarters for preventive measures will just continue to be led around by its nose. If they want to catch the bomber, they will either need a lot of manpower to go for a battle of attrition, or hope for some unexpected bad luck on his part."
"Unexpected bad luck… like a traffic accident?"
"That's right. Something that would be unexpected to precognition – well, that's not really the case with a car or a train, but in any case, a bad luck that one wouldn't think of happening in everyday life.
– Ah, like a natural disaster aimed at one person in particular, that would be a kind of unforeseen bad luck, too. Precognition isn't seeing the future. You can't see what you can't read."
"…? Precognition isn't seeing the future? But isn't that what they're doing?"
"Like I said, that is prediction at most. For example, let's say there is someone who will be killed two days from now – Victim A – and someone

who will kill him – Culprit B. With precognition, you would see the result of this case just by seeing these two aliases. Even though you wouldn't know their faces, their names, and above all, their reasons."
"The hell? If you can know even without a reason, then that's not seeing the future. Isn't that just instinct?"
Even I can do that, said Employee's Friend A, and Aozaki Touko smiled bitterly at her.
"Don't group others with the likes of you, Shiki. What you have is a sixth sense that can reel in the future just by hearing and imagining, whereas precognition has both foundation and proof.
Listen. Humans stand at the peak of the primates, a peak built upon their various cultures and bodies of knowledge. They have evolved not just in bodily functions, but also in the usage of the brain. But, evolution is the process of conforming to the shape of the environment. Functions which are useless or which would burden the act of survival are cut off. If there is a working substitute with a lower cost, then even an excellent function will be stopped – that's life. Precognition is nothing more than one of the 'functions originally possessed by humans' which had disappeared in the name of safety.
As a simple explanation, they are humans who 'cannot forget'.
Humans are always watching a clip. We receive an unthinkable amount of information just by talking like this – and they will pick up all of it, unconsciously. This is something that normally would burden the brain, 'all the information obtained by sight' which will only cause an overflow; they will record it all without casting aside a single thing. Not just the words, but the voice, the smells, the tempo, even a single stain on this wall – all of it, unconsciously.
The information from everything in the environment is mixed together in a coordinated fashion; the moment the result which would be inevitably derived from this arrangement is confirmed, is when they see the future as a clip. Prediction of the future is not instinct, it is nothing more than advanced information processing. It isn't something episodic, like the way Shiki somehow manages to read ahead. They are normal people with a regression in just one part of their functions."
"… It's a regression? Even though they can do something so amazing?"
"Of course. Humans, having evolved as intelligent beings, are able to pick up only the information necessary to them through clever selection. Nowadays, civilized societies have become too complex and cannot be completely processed by humans.
This doesn't need to be said, but there is a gap between the environment we are in, and the world that we individually recognise. The world we individually grasp is revised based on individual values. There are individual differences in the choice between what is necessary and what is not – you know this, right?
It's the same as the case of the Fujou Building. Originally, the world is perceived using all five senses, with all of them connecting together forming

a single union; it is correct to grasp the world like this. However, that is futile. That sort of information processing is futile. In any case, it would not be a great difference whether or not civilized societies possessed ways other than sight to recognise the external world. *Individualisation* and adaptation are the prime virtues of us humans. When we broke off from primates, we naturally lost that connection, and began to use all of the five senses as a unitary function. We do not divert our attention for every single thing which does not connect. It's a conservation of mental energy. Labour is something confined to only ever decrease . We have no interest in anything but ourselves, so we pick up nothing except truths which bring benefits to ourselves. After all, that is the method of our certain, accelerating growth; it took us a thousand years to understand this.
…Let's go back to the example before.
Victim A and Culprit B; no matter who you look from, you would see the future of 'being killed, killing' with precognition. You would not see the image of the criminal, but you can read out the result even just from A. This is the result gained from reading A's lifestyle patterns, even A's unconscious perception of danger which is unknown to himself – but if a human is constantly processing this information, he would be crushed. Precognition is an unnecessary power now. Machines which can substitute it have already been invented, and continue to evolve day by day. Eventually, the day may come when we are overtaken by artificial intelligence capable of estimating the formless future."
The information originally obtained by the senses of seeing and hearing.
An intelligent prospect, conjecture of the future.
Unifying them, lifting them to the limits of reality – that is precognition.
They are looking, not at the 'future several minutes later',
but the 'result several minutes later' produced by reality.
"Hmph. But this guy's different. *He's not seeing anything at all* ."
"Hm? Being able to see the future without any prior arrangements, you can't even call that prediction anymore. It's not a special right; it's abusing a privilege."
"…That's not seeing. But whatever, it's annoying. Anyway, there are two kinds of precognition, right? So what's the exact difference between prediction and calculation, Touko?"
The magus spoke of the difference between prediction and calculation.
The one with practical uses – that would be calculation,
and the one which would be dangerous as a culprit – that would also be calculation.
– On the other hand,
the correct method as a human being would be prediction,
and the one which would be compatible with Ryougi Shiki is –
"Well, it's just what-if's, but I can't help that. Let's end the talk about precognition here – Mikiya-kun, can you bring me some tea? I'm thirsty from talking so much."
"Yes, right away… but Chief, what should you do if you meet someone with

precognition?”
“Hm? If it’s the prediction kind of precognition, then it’s fine to just leave them alone. Right? Relatively speaking, they are the ones who would more easily fit in with society. If they can precisely offer advice to a third party, then they can precisely form compromises.”

3

Mikiya-san explained about precognition plainly. Calculation was building up the future; prediction was reading the future; and my precognition was prediction.
But putting that aside,
“Mm, looks great today, too.”
why is he eating that delicious-looking meat tart that I don’t even know when he placed an order for.
…And we were having a serious conversation up until now.
To see someone eat happily with such relish, it was like the air relaxed; it was vexing, like we were just making idle talk. Even I can’t remain silent.
“…Even if you say that it’s only because I have a good memory, that doesn’t feel real to me. I don’t even have a good head.”
“It would be dangerous if you were conscious of it. It’s probably because the function of precognition is detached from Shizune-chan’s life – or maybe you can call it the ego – so it wouldn’t affect your actual life. And on rare occasions, when the conditions are met, you’re connected and the clip is replaced.”
Mikiya-san said this seriously, while devouring his meat tart. Munch munch.
…This is as much as I can endure. Finally, I stopped remaining silent.
“Excuse me, I would like this orange and sunflower mixed tart!”
I ordered something from the menu to the employee.
Mikiya-san looked at me with an awfully bright smile on his face.
Shortly thereafter, the tart arrived, and are sunflowers really something you eat to begin with? I picked up a fork while thinking thoughts like this.
Mikiya-san nodded kindly to me.
“Well, that was all just someone else’s opinion, so it’s okay if you ignore it. There’s only one thing I want to say to you.”
“T-That would be…?”
I felt somewhat tense, like I was about to receive a treat.
It was then,
“Shizune-chan isn’t that special. Something like seeing the future isn’t worth worrying about that much. Right?”
that I was washed over by the sort of everyday encouragement that I didn’t want to hear.
The words that I didn’t want to hear the most became icy water, instantly lowering my temperature.
“…You can say that because you can’t see it, Mikiya-san.

How can someone who can't see – "
– understand how I feel.
I barely managed to swallow these disgusting words.
"Actually, I can see the future just a little bit, too."
Unmindful of my feelings, Mikiya-san continued in a light tone.
…It was a horrible betrayal. To praise me and then take me down again, maybe this person really is a devil. After all, he's covered in black.
"Please don't just say that on the spot. Anyone can just say – wha?"
I doubted my own eyes. Mikiya-san turned over the business card he laid on the table earlier and let me see it. I was amazed when I opened it – a scribble said, 'Shizune-chan will order an orange tart'.
"See, it's amazing, isn't it?"
"……That's true, but,"
I puffed my cheeks.
Did he think I was such a child that a trick like this would work?
"Please don't make fun of me like that. Isn't this just a guess? If you think about what's ahead, anyone would know this. What I talked about was something that doesn't change, something that would become reality,"
"If you mean a future that's decided, I guess the man from before is different, then? After all, the future that Shizune-chan saw was different from the real conclusion."
" _ "
Oh – I raised my voice, and froze.
It felt like a big bucket of cold water was splashed onto my hot head.
"…Right. He was saved, wasn't he?"
"Of course. It was thanks to Shizune-chan that he was saved. When you were on the bus, you saw the construction site out of the corner of your eye, and carefully observed the man on the same bus; all the parts came together when he headed in the direction of the construction site from the bus stop. So there. That can't be compared to something like the prediction on this memo, but the act itself is the same.
You just think of the future as a matter of course… Well, you're a little different from other people in how far you go, but that's not something to have a guilty conscience about. You just said it yourself, Shizune-chan. The future is something that anyone would know if they thought about it."
Mikiya-san's words slipped straight into my heart. It wasn't anything special; they were just common, ordinary words, but,
' – that's not something to have a guilty conscience about.'
it was like the mud that stained my chest was felled by its echoes.
"…Is it, a matter of course?"
"It is. All humans live by seeing the future. The me from five minutes later, the me from one day later. Depending on the person, they might even look at themselves from one week, from one year later. That isn't something decided like precognition, but something more vague, although it's nothing more than an expectation, that this is how they want to be. There's no such thing as a person who doesn't dream about the future while relying on his

present self."
Mikiya-san said this, plainly, but strongly.
Seeing the future, changing the future – those are just misapprehensions that I myself held onto.
After all, you can't change something that hasn't been born yet.
To humans, the future is always just something 'to be thought about'.
What I do is not peeking into the future with my precognition and changing it, but making the future by living in the present.
No matter how much I see the result, the future is not yet born.
If I ever see an unchangeable future, then that's not seeing the future; that can only be deciding the future. I don't have an outrageous power like that, and in the first place –
"…The future I see is always painful. There's never a future where I'm smiling. So then, that means – "
"Right. Isn't the future that you see, a warning? As though it was saying, 'this will happen – work hard, so you won't have to feel regret'."
…His voice quietly resounded.
The words he wanted to say to me, was the wish that this is the way he himself wanted things to be – a noble prayer.

↓

" – Well. That's one thing. But I still think it's a problem to know the questions on my test by seeing three days ahead…"
That's right. Mikiya-san is correct, but that's still an answer from someone who can't see it. I know now that my worry is something conceited, but something like a vital solution strategy is still –
"Right. So, instead of thinking three days ahead, think four days ahead."
…Uh. Mikiya-san suggested this with a ridiculously gentle smile.
"Wha – What do you mean?"
"Shizune-chan knows things three days ahead, right? Then you can just think about what's beyond that. The best I can do is think one hour or one day ahead, but your standards are set far beyond that. It might be difficult, but that would be your compensation for possessing special eyes. You can't cure precognition, and it would be a shame to cure it."
He grinned.
…Amazing. I felt I just saw a black tail on Mikiya-san for an instant.
Mikiya-san is saying that even people who are special need a handicap specific to people with special powers.
Otherwise, a special power just becomes a burden.
…This person identified my worry and weakness at the same time. If I have enough time to ramble about my worries, then I should first master this power. 'I'm the only one cheating'. I had always held this defeatist way of thinking; it was being beaten back into shape from its very foundation by these sharp but warm words.
"…You really got me. You look gentle, but you're actually strict, Mikiya-san."
Mikiya-san went, hmph, as he frowned.

Apparently he objected, not to the part about being strict, but the part about looking gentle. For an instant, I felt that I saw the visage of Mikiya-san being teased, with his friendly figure and his baby face.
“Um. Would you mind giving me that business card? I want to have something to remember this day by.”
“Huh… Well, I’m not sure about that. My business cards are kind of useless, but… well, I guess that’s what they’re for.”
Mikiya-san gave me his business card a bit shyly.
…Well. A lot’s happened, but what really shocked me was this person’s perception. Mikiya-san had grasped my worry at *that point in time* , and began preparations only so that I would understand. Even without precognition, he had created a bright future.
But still,
“By the way, that was strangely off.”
“…I am ashamed. Not choosing from Today’s Recommendation, but from the Challenge Menu beside it instead – I hadn’t thought of that.”
Mikiya-san’s precognition didn’t have enough sunflowers.
As you can see, having a limit is also a human-like ripple of hope.

Future Gospel/Finish

4\ 4\

†

Now, let us see his last story.

†

August 3rd, 1998, 11:32 A.M.
At the large department store slightly removed from the Fumine JR station, Ryougi Shiki stepped onto the third floor of the multi-storey parking lot.
The future has already been determined.
Once she had pursued him all the way here, her death cannot be overruled.
The route she moved by was different from the result he saw, but,
then again, the family that on a whim decided to go home early, wasn’t there either.
One minute from now.
Ryougi Shiki will turn her attention towards the two parents and their child carrying their shopping appearing at the mouth of the elevator, be caught in the scattering cloud of 1,500 corundums launched from three separate directions, and become scattered chunks of meat.

In the shadow of the wagon twenty meters away, he was *clearly seeing it* .
The parking lot was devoid of people.
The air here was several times more relaxed than the outside world.
From here, even the bombing at the bridge was a story on the Other Shore.
The calls of ambulances; the sirens of patrol cars; no attention was directed at these things.
Unfolding far and wide with no distinction. Everything can happen without existing as long as it is here.
“Hey. I’ve caught up, bomber.”
The girl talked into the cell phone, and removed her finger.
The cellphone dropped to the concrete floor.
From the sash on her back, the girl drew a knife.
The two eyes,
/ carrying a blue light, /
glared at her surroundings, the result it held.
The parking lot was devoid of sound.
The summer sunlight formed thick shadows like the darkness.
Knife in hand, Ryougi Shiki headed towards the unseen bomber.
Along the way, the family appeared at the mouth of the elevator on her right side.
Within an instant.
He pressed the button on the remote control.
At nearly the same time. As though cleaving the air, Ryougi Shiki’s knife flashed.
One second later.
Ryougi Shiki, her body taking the full force of the 2mm corundum shrapnel, yet still retaining her human form, was, at her wit’s end, instantly killed.
One second later.
Kuramitsu Meruka’s sight of the future, as though his eye was directly bisected in a diagonal line, was split in two and extinguished.
“Ah – ?!”
He held down on his right eye in agony.
Ryougi Shiki continued at her own pace without a hurry, walking towards the large wagon.
“Wha, w-why – ?!”
A sudden blackout. Unreasonably intense pain. A mysterious phenomenon.
Bewildered, the bomber clicked the switch on his remote control again and again as though his life depended on it.
But the explosives did not respond. Was there a problem with the signal? A mismatch? Or did the remote malfunction? No, that was all impossible. He weighed together reality to make sure those things did not occur. Not a single thing changed in the future prepared by the bomber. However – ignoring all of this, the gunpowder coincidentally refused to detonate.
“That, can’t, be – !”
Horror raced across his mind. For the first time in a long while, the bomber himself shook with the fear of the unknown.

Unable to bear the pain of the right eye that had lost its light, Kuramitsu Meruka curled up into a fetus.
“Touko said it a lot of times too. ‘Perceive too much, and you blind yourself’. You listening to me? You’re not seeing anything with that eye anyway, so you don’t need it.”
He can hear a voice. The bomber, with his remaining left eye, expanded his vision, trying to look for a way to escape. But of course, it was obvious that he couldn’t see even a fragment of ‘a future where escape is possible’.
“You really could have killed me if that had been just a prediction. Doesn’t even need to be said. In your case, what you see is too clear.”
“It hurts…!”
The footsteps were close. Probably less than five meters away. He understood that, as soon as they circled around to the back of the wagon, he will be killed. This certain result could be imagined even without precognition.
“Why, why – ?!”
It wasn’t the horror of being killed. This future was just too doubtful. He had always lived believing in the outcome – bound by it. This absolute faith, this inescapable curse – why did it choose to break down now?
“Why did the future change?!”
“It didn’t change. There wasn’t a future all along. You can’t reach out to something that isn’t there.”
So the magus had said.
The difference between prediction and calculation; the difference between seeing a possibility of a future which may occur, and determining an outcome which will occur.
Calculation of the future, determining the outcome from your own will, was an abnormal ability exceeding prediction of the future.
However –
“The future is uncertain, that’s why it’s *invincible* . But. If it has a form, then obviously it will break.”
A vision that has been determined is no longer the unknown.
The concept of death applies to things with form.
For Ryougi Shiki, this was clearer a ‘killable’ target than those twisting spirals.
“You can’t reach out to a coincidence, but you can reach out to a certainty. See you, bomber. Your future was a dead end from the moment your result took a clear form.”
The footsteps, echoed very close to him. Ryougi Shiki raised her knife, feeling that she was about to receive her natural reward, and faced her prey in the shadow of the wagon,
” – What’s with you?”
having not predicted this ending.
Acting like a girl her age, she was dumbfounded for a few seconds, and saw for herself the last moan of the bomber.
◇

August 3rd, 1998, 11:50 A.M.
The multi-storey parking lot bombing, became reality five minutes late.
The scattered corundum cruelly tore apart the parked cars and the concrete walls and columns, but miraculously there were no deaths.
The father covering his family was lightly wounded, and a child of nearly fourteen years suffered a heavy injury, but they were safely taken under the protection of the ambulance that had rushed over, and the case was resolved.
Hereafter, there were no records of the the appearance of the bomber called Kurametsu Merca, of the girl in the kimono at the scene of the incident.
– After that.
With the affairs with the bomber cleanly and completely wiped from her memory, a pleased Ryougi Shiki immediately began looking for the next seed of displeasure.
She did not enter the meeting place, and firmly loitered under the blazing sun; the reason for this is something that others, those who cannot become Gods, will not be entrusted to know.

5\

It was the last day of the summer holidays.
A black-haired Naomi-chan welcomed me back when I returned to the Reien Girls College dormitories.
“Hey, welcome back. Anything interesting happen?”
Naomi-chan was Naomi-chan as usual.
Without breathing even a word of the personal tragedies that occurred to her, she was easygoing and languid, behaving like the common modern schoolgirl.
“There wasn’t anything interesting, but there was one thing that was original. I, for the first time, have experienced this thing called a broken heart.”
Ahem, I threw out my chest.
Naomi-chan looked at me like I was some kind of rare animal, but, well, I’ll let it go this time.
“Wait, broken heart, you mean like unrequited love?! You said there’d only be a mass of old people at your familial home, Seo!”
“That’s true. I just had a little meeting before going home. Oh, I bought the CD. Should I bring it out now?”

“Ah… um, sorry, something a bit different came into my hands. I’ve dubbed it, so I’ll give it to you. But leaving that aside, what’s this broken heart! Talk about your broken heart!”
The bait was so good that she became like a piranha. Reflecting upon the beauty and terror of female friendship, I replayed the summer memory.
Hiding away all the comments about precognition, it was a story about meeting a man in black-rimmed glasses, in the middle of a certain street, getting to know each other because of a trivial coincidence, then being together for only an hour for tea.
Naomi-chan, hearing it from the beginning to the end, gave a single sigh of displeasure.
“Oh, was it boring?”
“No, it was interesting. But Seo. It’s hard to say this, but, that’s not love.”
Just as I expected.
I knew those words since three days ago.
“You think so too, Naomi-chan?”
“Yeah. You were just admiring him. You were just getting enthusiastic at an idol, screaming and making a fuss, just a happy fan. Love is more, how you say, unprecedented and indecent, and worse, you can’t predict it, and it’s like you take a deep breath on a roller coaster and the only things left are the collisions and the goal. To be frank, it’s not something that would leave behind a clear memory…”
Naomi-chan, with a girlishness beyond me, exploded, her circuits going full-throttle with her philosophy on love.
It doesn’t even need to be said that I had understood this to be the case.
My emotion at that time was truly an instant of tender attachment. True, I did like him, but it was like I hadn’t thought about anything beyond that; really, it was a childish passion.
But, as Naomi-chan said, it was a very happy time. Even if it wasn’t love, even if it was a misunderstanding, I’ve decided to always remember that hour of that day, as unrequited love.
“Well, whatever. By the way, where’s that man – ”
Naomi-chan’s question overlapped on the query of the former me.
The parting on that day had begun with that question.

◇

“Um. By the way, where are you from, Kokutou-san?”
“Hm? I was here all the way from middle school to university. Why do you ask?”
“N-No, I don’t really know, either. I got the feeling I had to ask you.”
For some reason, I breathed a sigh of relief. A usual bad habit of mine appeared, but perhaps this was also a gathering of conditions needed to see a more certain future.
– On the other hand.
Mikiya-san fleetingly turned his eye towards what’s outside the window.
In contrast with the dimly-lit cafe, the street of buildings was illuminated by the midsummer rays. There, a slightly conspicuous shadow stood. It was a

kimono… worn casually with a pongee, a stylish man – wait, that's not

\ \ \

Blood. Blood. Blood. An almost tremendous number of jellybeans. Like stinging taco sauce. Bloodstained metal, and bloodstained concrete, and a bloodstained woman, and bloodstained black clothes.

\ \ \

" _ "

A daze so severe I've never felt one like it before blew away my sense of time in reality.

If my precognition was an operation based on information processing like he said, then that person in the kimono was a severe factor that can let me easily predict the future just by being there.

"It's taken quite some time. I should leave soon."

Mikiya-san took the chit while looking at his watch.

I frantically gulped down whatever it was in that scene I just saw now – no, it was too fragmented to begin with, I couldn't even make out anything specific about it – and shook off my daze.

"T-Thank you very much."

As I thanked him, I looked at Mikiya-san with upturned eyes.

Rather than finding fault with how I had not left my seat, Mikiya-san waited for me to continue.

Firmly mustering the last piece of courage for today,

"Well… at the beginning, you said that precognition isn't rare, that you know someone like that… is that Kokutou-san's lover?"

"Come again?!"

I splendidly stepped onto the land mine myself.

"Ah, no, um, is she?"

Mikiya-san was shocked even as he looked embarrassed. His gaze was aware of the beautiful woman in the kimono outside the window.

But the shock I felt was many times beyond that. Ah, farewell, heartbreak. It was too short a dream. After all, there's no way I can be a match against that. Whether it be through brute force or a duel of love, there was such a difference in our abilities that if we fought one hundred times, I would be killed one hundred and one times.

"That was a shock. Did you see that?"

The behavior of Mikiya-san, hiding his embarrassment by asking this, was, hmm, criminal in various ways. I crumbled down, feeling more and more dejected, but there was something much more important than that right now.

"No, I don't know so much that I know what kind of person she is… but, please listen, and don't be angry.

….Um. If you keep on going out with that person, you will lose your life, Mikiya-san."

" _ "

In terms of time, it was about five seconds.

To me, it was a frozen silence.

Mikiya-san looked blank, and yet, he definitely did not laugh.
Afterward, when I thought about it, if I were to say that I felt unrequited love, it would be this instant that broke my heart.
Miki – no, Kokutou-san accepted my precognition with a calm expression.
“I see. Thanks, Shizune-chan.”
The way he was just now, it was something I would never forget for the rest of my life… would be saying too much, but if possible, I wouldn’t want to forget it for the rest of my life.
It was because the explanations and the advice from before weren’t a match for this smile.
“But please don’t tell me the details. It’s scary, but if I hear it, I think I wouldn’t be able to do something important.”
The man with the black-rimmed glasses smiled bitterly as he rose from his seat.
He was saying that, more than his own fate, what he was afraid of was if he ran away.
To that strength, there was respect and admiration from the bottom of my heart.
Even if it was just a meeting of one hour, to me, it was a guide that would be difficult to find something to exchange for.
Thus, we separated before the cafe.
Kokutou-san, after seeing me off as I headed towards the station, raised his voice to the someone waiting outside the cafe.
I watched the two of them from afar while slipping into the crowd, murmuring ‘thank you’ one more time, and left the summer streets behind.

◇

– The above were the details of the summer.
I can see the future as ever, and I live on, day-by-day, even as I lose my nerves to the sudden bursts of self-hatred.
Nothing has changed and nothing has been resolved, but at least I will ignore the act of worrying to the best of my abilities. Like the smile that Kokutou-san showed me, if I don’t trust in the me right now, a future of joy won’t come.
For someone like me, who cheats with the future, it is obvious that there is an obligation that comes with the cheating.
It was because I believe that it will definitely be a good thing for someone that I can accept these experiences regardless and without discrimination.
Just as it was wished, let’s move on facing forward.
“So you know, there had to be an operation, so they totally shaved all his hair off, but when that idiot brother woke up, he looked in a mirror and said, don’t I look cool without hair? He was trying to pass it off with some bull like that! It’s not cool, you’re just bald, what’re you, a skinhead? We don’t need a Venusian in the family! I bopped him across the head, and the wound opened up again – !”
Before I knew it, we were talking about her little brother, and Naomi-chan was seriously cheerful.

…When she had gone home, with an expression as though the world had ended, she must have desperately fought in the passenger plane. A strong prayer against the future. Even if what awaited her was an immovable fate, with her strength to decidedly see the future with optimism, when it ended, the painful past was laughed off as ‘a good thing’.
“You were cool, Naomi-chan.”
“I know, right? Of course it’s better to be cool than cute! Nowadays, high-class mistresses or honor students are just annoying. This is going to be the age of the cool beauty. Just spare us the baldies!”
Then. The wonderful laughing voice of Naomi-chan came to an exact stop. Her gaze was on something behind me. The newcomer who was making herself at home slightly removed from us up until now, came over to our table.
” – You need something?”
Che , Naomi-chan clicked her tongue. Please be silent; how vulgar; her enmity was so obvious that I thought she would start letting loose with warnings like that. But.
“Oh no, you just seemed like you were having fun. Would you mind if I joined?”
Contrary to our expectations, she greeted us.
Independent from our confoundment, a first-rate smile appeared on the face of the first-year girl; ‘how do you do?’
Naomi-chan’s mouth opened and closed as she remained speechless, and I saw the future of this girl who seemed to be the concept of ‘young mistress’ given form.
“Oh? Could you be Seo-san? This saves me the trouble of going to greet you.”
I, in my own way, was shocked in a different way than Naomi-chan, blinking many times, and roughly understood the situation.
It will be a year, no, even longer.
I will share a room with this girl, and live these school lives, filled with troubles.
Most likely, the impression she got that we wouldn’t get along, would be overwritten in a single second.
We would become roommates, swearing to each other the oaths of a strong friendship.
It was the last night of the summer holiday that I met my dear partner-in-crime, one who will eventually stand at the peak of Reien.
Incidentally,
“By the way, where are you from, Kokutou-san?”
because I ask such questions, she will always become mystified.
It was the same here. I felt relief when I thought it was just the same family name; her correcting this mistake was another story, considerably further into the future –

Mobius Link

Future Gospel Introduction

Möbius link

Future Gospel – Introduction

†

Another hot summer had arrived.
I was gazing listlessly at the city from the roof of a four-story building.
This summer had started unusually late and it's been going around that this year would be an unusually cold one, but when you pull back the curtain like this, it's a heat wave toppling the daily highs.
The blazing sunlight cut at the eyes like a flashbang, and the heat seething up from the pavement was like some sinus-clearing musk.
A summer like a modern day Sahara Desert. Swarms of firm buildings, tireless caravans, and white bones of oxen dotted the hot sand.
Of course, the swarm of buildings were not so fragile as to say they were built on sand, and most of them had stubbornly persisted for a decade. Some had rotted away; even if their spirits were partly exhausted, one could do nothing but pray that their existence was fulfilling. The end comes for all things. No matter what angle you may take, that fundamental tragedy cannot be overthrown. If, in that tragedy something new was born, it would be a sufficient panacea to all of us who came after, though this was a meager encouragement.
And so on.
I tried indulging myself by pondering things unsuited to me, a cigarette in my mouth. Just idle thoughts spoiling a peaceful lunch break. It was pretty inelegant, but I guess lyrical contemplations are a part of my job too.
The roof of the building I was standing on was neither all that low nor all that high. It overlooked average buildings, but did not even reach the knees of buildings that had been constructed over the last few years.
Well, it was hardly an upfront building to begin with. To the common eye it was an abandoned building, a bad debt. It seemed that all work on the building was abandoned halfway through.
Ground was broken in 1992, and it was abandoned the following year in '93. The lengthy construction ceased at the fifth floor, which now functioned splendidly as a roof. I heard that the people who used this abandoned building previously had worked on fixing it up. I have no idea what their names were or what they all looked like, but I'm thankful for their excessive idle curiosity.
"…"
I unintentionally raised my glance, and recalled the dizziness found in the white of the sun's rays.
Only half of my field of vision remained. When I was young, I lost the ability to see in my right eye in an accident, but thankfully, I didn't have any problems living with just my left.
I took a deep breath and recovered from my lightheadedness.
Leaning against a rotten fence, I took in the panorama of the city scenery to

get rid of the bad taste in my mouth.
This place was about fifteen meters up. It wasn't so picturesque that you could call it a bird's eye view, but it was high enough for gazing at the city. There was a face to the city up here that you couldn't discover and could hardly even imagine from the ground.
Like the normal house in the corner about twenty feet away. It was old, a surviving two-story residence from around the Shōwa era. It was in fact three stories, and in a lower area where you would see nothing but the roof, there was a hanging garden, about six feet across and twelve feet long. The existence of such an overflowing green garden on top of the tile roof was enviable. On clear days, the laundry would be hung out to dry, without fail. Probably an ongoing daily routine since before I was born.
From this height, you could only catch sight of a small portion of the roof of the ten-story building standing right beside those Japanese-style homes. It was supposedly an office building, but the roof seemed to have been closed off. A winding emergency staircase was the sole method of access, but unfortunately, an iron railing ran down it.
While every person employed in the building would be brought closer to the picturesque scenery if they simply stepped up, they were unconcerned with even the existence of an entrance.
If you changed your focus yet again, you would discover a completely closed-off back alley. It ran between the gaps in the houses and was used only by people living in the neighborhood, a small path outside of common knowledge.
From the path, and before you went out in the street, you can reach a parking lot that had been constructed roughly five years ago. Once it had functioned as an alleyway, but now has been rendered pointless… Or it might have been, but a close look revealed a space that one person had barely been able to squeeze into. Even those of us who used that street everyday would probably not even notice this path in the depths of the parking lot.
All of those make up the face of the city, unquestionable proof that life existed beyond oneself.
As for my own life, the connection and breadth between them were only slightly fathomable from this height.
Even in the din of the city, the lives of its inhabitants don't change.
It's a present where public morals are on the rise and private morals decline, but everyone living their own lives is the one point that stays the same.
It was a motley assortment of a city that suffused with good cheer.
It wasn't that it totally lacked malice, but that it was filled with goodness.
Vaguely watching that sort of idyllic day was my only hobby.
I no longer looked to the future or lost hope in it.
The past and the future are, from the view of the present, nothing more than a distant paradise. As one who can never achieve divinity, all I could do is ponder that with all of my might.
"Anyway."

It's hot. I had come up onto the roof with the intention to relax, but my break was over.
I went down the stairs and headed towards the office on the fourth floor. Thanks to the summer sun, the hallway was lit up like a hospital; the girl's voice echoed.
"And he ended up running away from Professor Origa. He then arrived at a night festival. He encountered the spring city, with its fireworks, paper lanterns, and cherry blossoms scattering about."
The voice was coming from the office. It was a familiar recital. The girl was deeply immersed in an independently published book that had been tucked away in the shelves.
"It wasn't as if he longed to be human.
Only, the city was so varied, so dazzling. Surely no one would notice one more, even someone that was not one of their own."
Curiously, it is touted for being an unpopular, lifeless short story.
The books he had left behind were mostly children's stories, and as they were picture books it was only natural. But half had contents that left children far behind.
This short story was one such example. The setting was a city in an Edo blended with fantasy; the story of the life of a man who escaped from a professor of Western studies and lived among people.
The odd thing was, that man was not a human, but a robot. It was obvious that it was a robot. For a face, the robot had a perforated vacuum tube that represented eyes and a mouth. It was a character created to be barely a simulacrum of humanity, but this simplicity was exactly why it lingered in the memory.
The robot pretends to be a human and assimilates into the life of the city. This did not arise from a desire to be human.
The robot, who had only known the dark laboratory, yearned for the beauty of the city. The sequence of events was reversed. The robot simply wanted to be human so it could be in the city, and so it pretended to be human.
However, several years passed, and –
"It is a strange analogy, but I am like ink for recording."
A worry that the robot could tell no one had been born inside him.
He had acquired a human-like heart, but no matter what, a human body was the one thing he could not obtain.
Even if he could disguise his face and his arms and legs, tears and blood were features with which he had not been equipped.
"The spring storm comes, once again.
As though they were competing with the dancing and scattering cherry blossoms, they formed large flowers in the night sky."
Even odder was that the festival in the story took place in the spring. Japanese people have an intrinsic link between fireworks and the summer, so fireworks in the spring specifically seemed to have felt appropriate for the author.
It was the same night as when the robot had come to the city.

The robot, looking up at the fireworks on top of a bridge crowded with people, was carelessly pushed by the crowd into the river. Suddenly he was in the water. The robot was weak to water, and just touching it was damaging. All of its functions went down, and its disguise that had hidden it among people melted.
Even while the robot in the river short-circuited, he desperately hid his face.
“It’s finally the awaited Spring.
They’ll drive me away. What should I do?
They’ll be frightened of me. What should I do?”
The robot hid his face, not because he wanted to keep living in the city, but for the sake of the people who lived there.
Screams came from the people on top of the bridge who saw him.
The people next to them were pointing their fingers and shouting.
“Ah. I am a monster.”
For the first time in many years, the robot remembered.
It was all a dream. He had meant for it all to go well, but from the very beginning to the very end, he was not one of them.
As he sank into the water, he gazed at the crowded bridge with his blurring eyesight, and,
“At last. A tear, from the eyes of a man.”
That was the end of the story.
The voice paused, and a short time passed after it was finished reading. If I left things alone, it might go on to the next story. I cleared my throat and without bothering to knock opened the door of the office.
“Oh, Mitsuru-san, you were here. And I thought you were gone for sure.”
After she put the book in her hands on the shelf, the pale girl turned to face me.
“I’d lock up if I was going out. I was just on the roof.”
“I see. That’s a shame, I should have gone too.”
Without a trace of shyness, the girl’s smile bloomed like a flower.
The office was dim, the blinds lowered. Inside was a miraculous figure.
She was about ten. Her long black hair flowed like water. While she had the sweetness characteristic of youth, her blue eyes held the light of maturity. She favored blouses that were completely out of fashion these days, but she was surrounded by a nobility that was untouched by the vogue.
“…”
I wasn’t the robot from before, but for a moment I could hardly believe the radiance I was seeing.
In a way, this girl was devilish.
Before this girl, anyone would look forward to her future and at the same time wish for her to remain as she was, forever –
“-What’s with that look? Though you tend to casually reveal your slyness even while you’re hiding it.”
“That was good for being off the cuff. But the last part may have been too much. Depending on the listener, they’ll end up suspicious of your disposition.”

The girl smiled like she was enjoying the casual conversation from the bottom of her heart.
“No problem. I don’t get stomachaches from others’ doubts.”
I replied untidily, and faced my own desk. No matter how beautiful she might be, to me this girl was bad luck. If I could, I’d pinch her in the neck and fling her out the window like a cat.
“Feh. You’re in a foul mood again today, Mitsuru-san. I sneaked away from my lessons just to come here, but you’re boring me. It’s probably because you’re having money troubles again. I even brought you some work, too.”
The girl pouted, looking mildly displeased, but I was the one who wanted to bury my face in my hands.
“… I don’t believe this. I told you not to come here without permission. And I know I told you ditching school to come here is beyond ‘causing trouble’ and into the realm of ‘intended murder’. It’s a vague feeling, but do you want to kill me that much, Lady Mana?”
“Hmm? Oh, no, I could never do something so pointless. More importantly, Mitsuru-san, I don’t like being called ‘Lady’. It makes me feel like I’m under someone’s protection, and it’s too formal. Especially in your case, Mitsuru-san. I get the feeling you’re being subtly malicious, or it’s like your snapping, ‘that’s close enough.’
… This is an order, but do you mind calling me Mana-kun like when we first met?”
“…….”
At the young lady’s incomparably anachronistic remarks, I wondered if it had all been a joke at my expense, and became even gloomier.
“Sorry, but I won’t go along with that. It’s not too late yet, so hurry up and get back home, Mana. I’m not interested in getting pushed around by a ten year old kid.”
Even as I unkindly knocked away her pursuing hand, the girl’s expression brightened further.
“Yep yep, Mitsuru-san’s good points are also what makes you seem like a hoodlum. You like it when I don’t mince words, right? I think you’re lacking in sensitivity for a picture book author, though.”
That was totally unnecessary. Leave me alone.
This should have come earlier, but I’m Kamekura Mitsuru, a novice picture book author.
I’m twenty-five this year, still no more than a rookie, but for whatever reason the magazines always remember me, and I have gotten a few books published. And it was all thanks to the previous tenant of this place that I had inherited all these connections along with the office.
“But Tears of a Vampire is a real work of art. You might be the type who burns himself out on his first book, Mitsuru-san …The second book, The Glowing Cage, was practically a waste of resources…”
The girl put a finger to her lips uneasily while she searched the bookshelf. Tears of a Vampire was the title of the short story the girl had been reading aloud earlier, as well as my debut work under my own name.

That one book had saved my life, and was how I had gotten to know this girl.
… It was exactly two years ago. My debts were piling up from this office's rent and living expenses, and at last the creditors had come calling.
The problem was that the creditors' boss was the area representative… of a mostly violent criminal syndicate. As the mere mention of their surname had me shuddering and contemplating life on a fishing boat or oil rig, I was filled with a desire to leave this town, and fast. The girl materialized out of that dilemma.
With a "Mr. Kamekura, this is an honor," and such, she forced her way in, book in hand, and the demonic black-suited young men made their exit.
As soon as I had breathed a sigh of relief, their boss, the Devil itself, appeared, and while I looked on dumbfounded, pulled me from the jaws of death by making me a member of their group.
"Perfect. I was just wanting an in-house detective agency. You, you're in charge. You oughta be good at that. Huh, you do picture books? Sure, if that's all it is. I'm not a demon. I'll let you moonlight at least that much."
And thus, I found myself running a detective agency – or to put it novelistically, I was in the investigative industry – while working on picture books, and stripped of my constancy.
The girl was my benefactor and the big boss's only daughter.
So it wasn't as if I hated the whole thing, but getting unnecessarily close was a problem. Frequenting my office may be a novelty and interrupt the oppressiveness at home, but for once I wish she'd come down with a passing fever.
"More importantly, Mana, what about the work from the syndicate?"
Work that came my way was generally background checks that lived up to the name of a detective agency, with the hard work stopping just short of involving illegal conduct.
In rare cases, I got wrapped up in affairs that forced me to go along with the boss's viciousness, but most ended quietly. The case the girl had brought sounded like something in between.
They're keeping the peace… Or so independently requested… Suspicious individuals are frequenting the area, it said. It went on: investigate said individuals, and if you determine that they're dangerous, promptly request their eviction.
"… I think there's been a salesperson hanging out in the back alley. They're probably not dangerous or a dealer, though. I'm not proud of this, but there's no way I could handle someone who's been hitting the gym."
"That's not the kind of person they mean. More like a struggling fortuneteller. We owe them from way back, so they want you to look after them and not bother acting tough.
I see. Maybe they were pushing this on me because they wanted to avoid violence. However –
"Is this the fortuneteller's address…?"
I searched for an old memory from almost ten years ago.

A shopping district in south Mifune. A fortune teller. Among the documents Mana handed over, an old picture of the woman stood out.
"… Wow. So that old woman's still alive, huh?"
"Hm? Do you know her, Mitsuru-san?"
"A long time ago, I did. Back then she was famous for being accurate with her fortunes, but I haven't heard anything recently. I thought she was dead for sure, though."
I guess her ability was still active.
Well… In any case, her physical strength had probably deteriorated. Nearly a decade had passed since then. She had to be close to seventy now. It couldn't be easy being a street fortune teller, so it looked like she still had a taste for getting involved in other people's destinies.
"My. It says this person could actually expose the future… really?"
Looking at the documents surprised Mana.
She was incredulous, but beyond that her expression said she couldn't understand the meaning of 'exposing the future'.
"Yeah. Precognition is generally fake, but she's the real deal. It's got nothing to do with compiling behavioral information, she's just an unembellished prophet. For one thing, she can expose a person's future even without any prior information."
Somehow believing these completely suspicious remarks, the girl's eyes lit up.
… I felt a headache coming on at my carelessness, but the damage was done. I didn't even need to think about what course of action the girl, intrigued at my words, would take.

◇

I waited until night before I went to finish the job.
South Mifune was the same old shopping district. In ten years, there were no noticeably different buildings. At most , the pachinko parlor's interior was cleaner, so much so, that it improved the camouflage that let everyone play with ease.
"I'm surprised. Adults stay up late, don't they."
The girl, following alongside me with a dance-like step, surveyed the night city.
It was shortly before 11 P.M. I had contacted the girl's home, so there wouldn't be any hullabaloo over a kidnapping, but I had no doubt I'd be questioned by Mr. Suzurigi later. Whatever the circumstances, all of this wasn't so much staying up late as it was the nightlife. As an agent of Mana's education, hard exhortation is a part of his job.
"Mana, over here. It gets dark from where we're going from now on, so try and stay by my side."
With a warning to the girl, we entered the narrow alleyway.
Beyond the narrow, dark, long alleyway, the dim glow of a lamp's light shone, like the altar of a temple. In the sweltering night, the diviner waited in a heavy black robe for customers.
"Welcome. Won't you step in for a moment, young man?"

Step in nothing; this was the dead end of a blind alley. There was nothing past her.
“Yes! Over here! Hello, Ms. Fortuneteller! Umm, would you mind if the other person is underage?”
“Oh my, I didn’t think that cute voice could belong to such a grim young man. Oh, how nice. It’s been a long time since I had a customer who was such a lovely child! Of course, of course. And what is the fortune you would like to know? Don’t be shy. There’s no charge for young girls.”
“Thank you very much. Then, could you predict Papa’s and my love fortune?”
Mana faced the fortuneteller without a care. The fortuneteller, with a hint of satisfaction on her face, peered into her crystal ball. In her movements that had been honed over the decades, I could see a tiredness that showed her age. Maybe she had aged a little. Her eyesight had deteriorated considerably. It was likely that even the girl right before her eyes was murky.
“Oh my. I don’t need to predict that, do I. It’s mutual love, young lady. You’re loved deeply. Any more than that will be a little difficult. Ethically.”
Ethically, huh.
“Yes. My objective is to defeat Mother one day, and take Papa back.”
With a smile on her face like a sunflower, the girl uttered a head-splitting joke. The conversation had gone completely off the rails, but the fortune teller was in a good mood. Guess it really had been a long time since she had any customers.
“Even the Mother of Mifune has hit rock bottom. Don’t do the whole avoiding an unhappy future bit and all of that anymore, huh?”
In the modern age, there’s a shortage of futures that aren’t unhappy. It didn’t matter how the old women saw the future; with happy futures out of stock from the beginning, a customer today wasn’t going to be satisfied.
“Oh? My, look who it is. This is nostalgic. You’re in the same line of work, yes. No, you were, I should say.”
The old woman narrowed her eyes and looked at me. …Hit rock bottom? No way. With her aged eyesight, she couldn’t even see my face in this darkness; she’d have to read minds to do that.
She was right. Just like the old woman said, I had already –
“Not you. I was referring to myself. I’ve grown old. I can’t see the futures of strangers at all. Your cynicism is correct. The Mother of Mifune is all but dead.”
“Huh? You can’t see the future?”
Mana looked crestfallen… or rather, curious as she stared into the old woman’s face.
“Yes, I can’t see it anymore. Only bright things. But, that is fine in its own way. Now I am much more at ease, and it’s like a great weight has been taken off my shoulders. Then again, after that happened, I started seeing nothing but the past. Honestly, what sort of karma is this?”
If you have the power to see the future, then obviously you can know the past.

But if that was true, the whole thing was even more depressing.
Despite her claims to be able to see the past, having no customers meant that that genius went unsought.
No one, no matter how dark their future, wanted to see the drab past.
“So that’s how it’s been for the last ten years. Old woman, your fortune telling is out of style. Here’s some friendly advice: quit. Don’t bother complaining. You’ve, well -”
The times have left you behind.
The romance that one could find value in a pure wish had disappeared quietly.
“Oh? And how about you? Have you changed in these ten years?”
Me? I’d – Hmm, how about that.
There were things that had changed. In the end, though, it was just that one function that was gone.
These ten years. No, properly, it was twelve. Had I just been blending into the life of the city, like the robot who had pretended to be human?
I had made the odd friend, parted, and tried to follow in the footprints left behind, a daily life one reader had found fault in.
“…Yeah. Pathetically enough, I haven’t changed. It’s a waste of resources. However you may feel, I don’t find any harm in it. I’ll go on being a half-hearted thug.”
One day. I suddenly felt like I was the robot no longer, but because of that, the myself that was born was unchanged. The change that had happened to me, to my life, may have been no different than imposing or not imposing upon others; I hadn’t given something yet.
“That’s not true at all. You’re a good person, Mitsuru-san. Have more confidence in yourself.”
The girl censured me with a serious look.
“… I’m honored, but what are you basing that on?”
It was a pointless remark, as always, but this situation called for it. I asked, anticipating what the answer would be.
“Why? Because you’re like Papa, Mitsuru-san. Like how you’re plain, and how your right eye doesn’t work, and how you’re weak towards women. I’m good at using people like that, you know?”
“…”
“Ah ha ha ha ha!”, the fortune teller couldn’t help but laugh loudly.
The most I managed was bearing it without saying anything.
“You’re laughing too much. You’re old, watch your health.”
She kept on cackling. Her maltreatment ended after about a minute. Was she satisfied, or did she get abdominal cramps? I really hope it was the former.
“Hah, hah, haah… well, live and learn. That boy has gotten pretty human, hasn’t he! …Oh, yes. Have you had a good ten years?”
… I wonder. Even a year ago was unclear, let alone ten. I cherished just the good and the bad like they were yesterday, though.
“Whatever. It’s a nuisance for you to run a business here. Some scary faces are going to be coming next, so go into retirement before then. It’s not like

you need the money, right? You've been doing it for free since way back."
"It's none of your business. I've been doing this since before you were born. I may be a nuisance, and I may have no customers, but I'm going to keep doing this until the day I die, and that's all."
Negotiations had failed. There was no way she was going to listen to what someone had to say… and much less what I had to say.
I hadn't gotten any results, but I had done my duty where work was concerned. The rest was in the gang's court. Eviction by force was exactly what they were best at.
"We're going home, Mana. It's time for kids to get to bed."
The girl spoke up.
"Wait. I have the feeling one thing that I heard was off. Ma'am, you said that you were all but dead. And you said that the Mother of Mifune was gone. So, why keep fortune telling ? You don't see the future anymore, and you're at peace now."
The fortuneteller's mouth twisted with irony at the girl's words.
It was an expression equal parts bitter smile and nostalgia.
In a tired voice, the old woman said,
"I wonder. Now that you mention it, it was only painful, I suppose. My life was consumed by the future, and I was left with absolutely nothing… Yes. Outside of servicing others, this thing has no purpose at all.
Like a meager prayer, she spoke of the life she had desired, for herself.
"…"
It was frail, but her voice was full of pride.
I had once had my life changed by a certain girl.
Because of that, I was liberated from a set, visible future.
In its place was a life full of failure for all I had earned, but even then I had things left.
The old woman had never had such an encounter, and even then she had sacrificed herself for the greater good, perhaps.
"Hey, Mitsuru-san. I have a favor to ask."
With a sweet, heavenly smile, the girl looked at me. It was frustrating. I hadn't been able to oppose that smiling face even once to this day.
"…I'll listen, but that's it. Let me hear it."
"I think the work of a fortune teller is amazing. This city needs the Mother of Mifune. And I really like her."
"Falling in love with absolutely anyone is a bad habit of yours… So? What do we do?"
"Asking a question you already know the answer to is a bad habit of yours, Mitsuru-san. Do you still want me to say it?"
"…That's enough. I'd get even more depressed if you did."
Deceiving Mana's mother… would be impossible, so I'd persuade her like my life depended on it. That wasn't all. Even though business sure as hell wasn't booming, I'd be supporting the old woman's work as a fortune teller . It'd mean looking after her until the bitter end.
"…There's a whole mess of problems. First of all, how do we know grandma

here's going to agree -"
"Don't worry about me. I'm just going to keep doing what I want to."
"See, she's really motivated too. Glasses-wearing Mitsuru-san can handle all of these little problems right? Or maybe we should call you Kuramitsu-san then?"
"…Hey."
I put a finger to the sharp pain in my forehead.
I really didn't want that name to come up.
It happened over ten years ago.
There was a man who could see a successful future, and thus had no choice but to choose that future.
The man, who no longer knew if he was living in the present or for the future, became, after a certain point, a slave for his future's sake, not his own will. A machine with no volition. A robot that only executed a set command that was the future.
The man became a machine-like bomber, and after five years of earning small sums, died at the hands of a killer.
The bomber… the man who called himself Kuramitsu Meruka , was killed there. The future that had bound him was cut apart, along with his right eye.
The bomber was defeated, terrified at the death that had pursued him right before his eyes. Just when the killer was about to mercilessly end the life of the painfully cowering bomber – the killer saw that figure and lost all interest, taking her leave like a fickle cat.
…It was probably a letdown for her. After all, the man who called himself Kuramitsu Meruka was too weak.
The killer moved on, and the bomber, left behind, was taken to the hospital.
That was twelve years ago.
There were two victims of the bombing incident that occurred at the car park.
One was a man who had protected his family and been slightly injured.
The other's right eye had been injured even though they were not in the explosion. A fourteen year old child who lost his eyesight.
I digress. The alias Kuramitsu Meruka came out of a comic I happened to notice, a villain's name. It may have been an alias, but as I went by a rearranged anagram of my own name, I obviously wanted to preserve at least a little of my identity.
Kuramitsu Meruka was no longer here.
The future was no longer visible.
Now I was human, merely putting on the act of a one-time seer.
"… Yeah, well. It's more about having a worthwhile framework than destroying something", I muttered despite my bad mood.
The girl smiled with a face full of trust and took my hand.
"Of course! Don't worry, ma'am. He may not be inspired yet, but Mitsuru-san's reliable when he gets serious! You can count on us!"
"Please wait. I know the name of the young man, but I still haven't heard yours."

The girl halted at the fortuneteller's small breath. She let go of my hand, faced her, and properly apologized by bowing.
"Mana. Ryougi Mana, Ms. Amazing Fortuneteller. Thank you for taking care of Mother – no, Father."
Just what kind of story was behind that name?
The old woman stared at the girl with a truly shocked expression this time. Her unseeing eyes blinked repeatedly.
"Aaah, is that so. These things happen, don't they."
As if she was looking at something dazzling, or blessing the future to come, she smiled gently.
"So they're well. I suppose that goes without saying, though."
"They're healthy as can be. Please stay healthy, and keep being yourself, ma'am."
And then she took my hand with a spring in her step.
With a glance, I informed the fortuneteller of our departure.
Strangely, the desk she was sitting at was grand and imposing, changed into a powerful existence. Nothing would change after coming here, but I had the impression that they were different. Perhaps.
The woman's story featured the encounter with the girl and then came to its modest conclusion. Even if the former leading lady came off the stage, the stage would remain as long as there were customers.
…That makes for a really busy time, though.
My story had ended ten years ago, but it seemed there was still a minor role for me to play.
"Let's go, Mitsuru-san. First we're going to persuade Mother."
"…The biggest obstacle right up front, huh."
After all, a robot will move how it moves.
My future was still full of hope and anxiety.
Even if this shed no light on the plot, I suppose the stage would keep going on, depending on the many central players.
The story will go on.
My destination was vague, but in my left eye I saw it clearly.

\ Future Gospel – Preface

0\

January 1996.
Under a sky that even now looked as if it would weep, he was enjoying his freedom.

A rendezvous at midnight. A promenade in the dead of night. A killer you meet at the intersection.
Humming those phrases to himself, he strode through the night city.
Of course it was a secret from her; wearing her favorite red jumper, and motivated by a masochistic abandonment, he was filled with a desire to kill or be killed, and he prowled the city like a doll that had lost its balance.
She slept deeply.
In going out into the night city in that space, he felt his own end.
The she who had been first to break.
The self that could only destroy.
The I that had to be protected.
The one that had to be protected.
Suffering from those contradictions was her role, and he was mostly unconcerned.
What could he do to save her? He had perceived the ultimate solution already.
He would have to disappear. Only then could she live happily.
And thus, he enjoyed the night now with no hesitation.
Like a dragonfly, singing a paean to what little life it had left.
And somewhere in his heart, like a child crying that he did not want to die.
“It’s not like I’m really afraid of dying.”
A lone murmur. It was not a pretense . In any case, even if he died, she would not. Even if he died, the body would not meet with death. Therefore, what he was frightened of was something else.
The blue sky at lunch, the sunset after class.
Those, and the dreams he had seen through that boy, were too much for him to –
“Welcome. Won’t you step in for a moment, young man?”
He suddenly stopped his feet. In the hand thrust in his pocket was a switchblade. Tonight, his mood was at its extreme, so it wouldn’t matter as long as there was an excuse.
The woman who had called out was a fortune teller .
He thought he had heard something about her at school, that she enabled you to avoid an unlucky future.
“Hah…”
You had to laugh.
Whatever this was, it was getting fun. He put strength into the fingers holding the knife.
Nevertheless, he needed a reason, so he spoke to her merely as a gesture.
“Heh. Interesting. Predict away.”
He presented his right hand that was not holding the knife. The fortuneteller stared at his palm and tilted her head back and forth in puzzlement over and over.
“C’mon, let’s hear the results. How can I avoid my crappy future and all of that?”
He found the diviner boring, and was awaiting her innocuous last words

when,
"…Well, I suppose there are these kinds of futures too . It's pointless. You're going to die. No matter what you do, no matter what you try, you have no future."
That. Even though he had resigned himself, he was entranced by the all too early death sentence.
"… What a surprise. You're the real deal, huh."
"I'm sorry," the fortuneteller sighed.
She did all seers proud by still staring at his hand through all of this.
Drained of strength, as if he had gone suddenly from hot to cold, he drew in his urge to kill along with his freedom.
The fortuneteller still stared at his future.
"Come on, enough. The forecast is bleak. I never really thought I'd be saved. Actually, this is almost refreshing. This isn't to thank you, but now I'll leave peacefully."
"No, that's not so. You certainly will die no matter what you do, but… it's rare to have this sort of future."
"Huh?"
The fortune teller was perplexed.
Or perhaps, after she had seen everything, she felt sympathetic towards him.
An uncommon precognition. The fortuneteller bestowed with the eye of God by some mistake, in a voice lacking confidence in even herself, said,
"You will soon disappear. Your way is dark, and there's nothing you can do about your future. Nothing will remain, and nothing will be saved. …And yet, it is still strange. Even then, your dream will live on."
She had correctly guessed what the future he had at last desired was.
"…"
There was faint joy, and a pain in his chest.
He made a lonesome laugh and withdrew the hand he had presented.
"This is it, then. Live as long as you can, old woman. It's dangerous at night here; it's no place for the elderly."

◇

In the unseen back alley, an unseen glow was left behind.
He walked towards the familiar riverbed, and aimed for the estate surrounded by the bamboo thicket.
When he casually raised his face, the sky had begun at last to weep.
He remembered a certain classmate.
The whistle he had learned from watching another eventually turned into a certain song he had learned by ear.
"…. but, your dream will live on…"
"Yeah, that's fine then," was his one pretense.
Fall in love with someone; she knew that was the answer.
But, he could only deny, and the things he had yearned for would never be his.
That was the only thing he was afraid of. If her and the boy's future was sworn, then there would be things that would go on, for sure.

“Ah, well. It’s bleak, but that’s just like me.”
He laughed innocently, singing in the rain.
In the pouring rain.
Dancing alone, he followed the path back home.

/Fin

English Release Credits

Translation

Quality Mistranslations
YHK

Typesetting:

Shido Itsuka
ProtoformX (PeriExe)

Formatting:

ProtoformX (PeriExe)